

THE
GOLD
BUSINESS

The Gold Business

THE
GOLD
BUSINESS

BY
CHIARA ASOBO

The Gold Business

COPYRIGHT

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © 2024 by Chiara Asobo

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without written permission of the copyright owner except for the use of quotations in a book review.

ISBN 978-978-768-981-3

www.tellusastory.life

Copyright © 2024 by Chiara Asobo

DEDICATION

To my beloved mother, Mbunyam Agnes who has always been my source of strength. To the late Linus T. Asong, one of my favourite authors of all time, who encouraged me to be a writer. To every young person out there trying to make ends meet.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In my lonely corners, I always find myself with a pen telling a story, my imagination runs wide as I recollect my life experiences and put them into my stories, however, no effort over time is without assistance somewhere else. In my case, I had the pleasure of working with Editors from Worital Publishers, whose literary professionalism has strengthened the book immensely, and also am grateful for the technical support from Xoxa Tech Media

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chiara Asobo, better known as Rheiasing, is a musician, a storyteller, and a spoken word artist. She has a Bachelor's degree in law from the University Of Yaounde 2 Cameroon, where she initially studied Economics for a year.

Fueled by a lifelong love for storytelling, she has journeyed around the Coast of West Africa learning new cultures and telling short stories. In her words "It is my love for storytelling that got me to the instrument and as I strum this guitar, every song is a story."

In the last two years she has released a couple of songs including "Like You," and "Tell Me Now." Currently absorbed in the artistic world, there is no limit to the stories she can tell, and being

The Gold Business

a traveler has enabled her to understand the environment and people more. She incorporates all these in her stories.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Title

Copyright..... 3

Dedication..... 4

Acknowledgement..... 5

About The Author.....6

About The Book.....9

Part One:

Where anxiety dwells, desperation follows..... 11

Part Two:

Not everything that shines is valuable: Those who want to leap, must first look..... 57

Part Three:

Where comes a solution, resolutions follow.....97

Part Four:

Nothing stays hidden under the sun. Now, we know..... 141

ABOUT THE BOOK

See! Let me tell you, there is no legality in business, business is business, stop asking stupid questions," Wale angrily responded to his concerned friend who wanted to be sure the business idea he was pitching was a legit one. His worries were indeed in line, as this very business idea would eventually lead to an adventure, but who knows if this adventure would bring them the wealth they seek, or lead them to a death hole?

In this book, the author's use of flashbacks takes us to a whole different world of business and the music industry deep inside the nook and cranny where dark secrets are stored. The revelations it spills will leave you in a horrific shock for a minute.

The Gold Business

The themes in this book are relatable everyday themes that would have you reminiscing and rethinking the choices you make henceforth. Every page leaves you with a taste of goodness to savour, as you turn to the last page in a desperate attempt to satisfy the thirst that the previous pages leave you with.

PART ONE

WHERE ANXIETY
DWELLS,
DESPERATION
FOLLOWS.

CHAPTER 1

The noise from the pub had kept most of the people around that neighbourhood awake throughout that night. On a regular day, the music wasn't supposed to be that loud, but they had brought out their musical amplifiers, and the whole place was crowded. That day, most game boys from around town were present at the pub, in respect of the celebrant, Chatter Flamz. It was his birthday.

Chatter Flamz was a popular comedian in town and had recently started releasing songs, he was very popular in Tabora city, and so the guests that turned up were enormous. Chatter wanted to use that opportunity to declare his current interest in music officially, and

The Gold Business

on that same day, he released a new single. The cheers from the crowd were huge, it was very clear the people loved him, there was just so much excitement that night, and it went on, and on until it was almost dawn.

Akua jumped up from the bed, stretched her body, and walked towards the window. She could still see some of Chatter's guests leaving the pub, while some of the boys sat on top of their cars, a bottle of whisky in each person's hand. She enjoyed the view for a while, a pale smile on her face for a second.

"*Charlie! you no dey sleep?*" Kojo asked her, yawning, and stretching his hands into the air. He lifted his head from the couch and turned it left and right to get rid of the stiffness. Kojo had slept on

the couch, and his friend Kwesi, was sleeping comfortably on the carpet, while Kwame slept on the bed alongside Akua. It was a self-contained room, belonging to Kojo, and he loved to have his friends around.

"Akua? you no dey hear me?" She had not bothered answering him the first time. Akua was seriously looking through the window not minding him. Kojo now got up from the couch and walked towards Akua following the direction of her gaze.

"Look at them, having so much fun, as if there is no tomorrow," Akua said with a sigh.

"But is there really a tomorrow?" She had an unusual softness to her tone this time. She walked to the bed and sat down. Kojo felt a little weird, so he went

closer and took a seat beside her, " *Are you alright Akua?*" he asked

"Yeah, I am doing fine."

"*You see Kojo, life is just so hard, seriously why are we even here?*" she looked a little upset.

Kojo stretched his hand on the table and got his weed, he put some in the crusher, glanced at Akua, and then focused on crushing his weed.

"*My dear, such is life, life isn't a bed of roses. Yes, life is hard, that's why we have to strive to be harder,*" he answered with an air of solemnness as he placed his rolled weed in his mouth,

"*Please Kojo, don't smoke that stuff right now, I am really not in the mood for a smoking room,*" Akua said, she climbed on the bed and wrapped herself in a quilt.

"*Are you about sleeping?*"

The Gold Business

"Yes, I didn't have any sleep at all last night, can you take that to the bathroom or the kitchen, please?"

"I thought you were in for a conversation, that's even why I wrapped this stuff, all the same, let me let you rest, I will be in the kitchen, it's a chaotic world right now, and we need the herb."

CHAPTER 2

It was already 2 pm that afternoon, and Akua was still fast asleep, even the noise from Kojo and the rest of her friends in the room didn't disturb her. It was almost 3 pm when Wale's loud voice woke her up. It was almost always impossible to sleep when Wale was around, he had a very loud voice and was unapologetic about the noise.

"Wale! Wale!! What kind of noise is this?" Akua got up drowsily and sluggishly made her way to the bathroom.

"Akua! My main chick!" Wale hailed her, his voice as loud as rumbling thunder. He made to touch her but she moved out of his reach swiftly.

"*Who is your main chick? Please don't flatter yourself,*" she had a mischievous smile on her face.

Wale laughed and in his usual loud voice, he called out to her, "*Ohh freshen up fast! I have a business proposal.*" Akua was already in the bathroom, but her ears stood at attention upon hearing 'business proposal.' She was so curious that she opened the bathroom door and asked, "*Which business?*" Kojo interjected, "*Go freshen up, we are waiting for you.*"

"*Charlie! If you see this car! Bhra! It's the latest model, only fresh for this man ehh, his watch, his designer clothes, his shoes, everything about this man is just fresh,*" Wale recounted, rolling up his weed. He kept going on and on, about this man he met at the casino.

"Wale! What even took you to the casino? Don't tell me you have started gambling?" Kwesi eyed him suspiciously.

"Gam! wetti? I go there, go look for links," Wale was almost out of breath as he puffed his smoke into the air, it created a circle before evaporating.

"Which link?" Kwame asked him in a very gentle voice. Kwame was the gentle one among them, gentle in all he did – in his dressing, in his speeches, and he rarely spoke. He was fond of just agreeing with nearly everything others said.

"Business link bro," Wale's deep voice, and his eyes bore evidence of the weed he was smoking.

"Guys are out there making so much money, we shouldn't just.." He

stopped for a while staring at Akua, who pulled out a chair, getting closer to the boys, "*We shouldn't just what?*" Akua asked. There was silence amongst the boys as they all stared at her. Their thoughts were the same, for even though Akua loved behaving like a boy, and dressed like a boy most of the time, she was still very beautiful, and after taking her bath, and wearing Kojo's shirt, she was just even more pretty. The boys dared not compliment her as she hated such compliments from them. It was already agreed that they were all one family, so none of them could talk about her beauty. Today, Wale couldn't hold his tongue.

"The empress! Charlie, you look like fresh fish!"

The Gold Business

"Seriously? Fresh fish, are you for real?"

Akua's tone was serious, Kojo

sensing that Akua was becoming offended by Wale's remarks, immediately redirected their attention back to what Wale was saying earlier.

"So Wale, you were saying something about a business, you got all our attention now."

Wale pulled his smoke again and continued.

"Let me just go straight to the point, I want us to get into the Gold Business," he stopped for a while, dragged another smoke, then continued, *"We will move Gold from here to there, and get paid handsomely,"* he stopped to weigh the reaction from his friends but they looked rather lost.

"Why do you guys look so confused?"

"Because we are indeed confused," Kwesi answered

"In fact, I am lost," Kojo said.

"Lost how?"

"Wait, wait, guys chill. Let me get this clear, Wale. You are saying, your business idea entails us transporting gold from probably, Ashanti to Togo, so it is more like a courier service, am I correct?" Akua asked.

"Yes! Something like that," Wale answered a bit unsure.

"Well, I hear the Gold business is a very lucrative one," Kojo said in a relaxed manner.

"Exactly, what I'm trying to say. We will be making real cash from this business."

"I seriously don't feel comfortable about this. Is it even legit?"

Kwesi was a bit suspicious about the whole talk. *"Bhra I seriously doubt if there is anything legit in this world right now, one just has to be smart, it's a hard world,"* Akua replied.

"So it's probably an illegal business then?"

Kwesi wanted to be certain the business was a legal one.

"Which one be legal, illegal business?"

See! Let me tell you, there is no legality in business, business is business, stop asking stupid questions." Wale was visibly upset, as he moved to the kitchen to get some water. Kojo who had been listening more, suddenly shrugged and said, *"Let's put this topic on hold for now, I think Wale has already introduced it, let's now process things in our minds,"* he stood up and walked out.

"You are right bro," Kwame added

They all moved from the room to the balcony, except Kwesi and Akua, who decided to go make some food in the kitchen. While in the kitchen, Kwesi shared his views on Wale's business idea with Akua, he seemed a little uncomfortable with the whole idea.

"I won't be part of Wale's business plan if it's something illegal, I can't risk going to jail."

Wale had heard the statement from the balcony and in a very serious tone, he asked, "Who is talking about going to jail, Kwesi?"

"Come on! Don't be negative, it's just business," Akua addressed Kwesi in a relaxed manner, that got him staring at

her for seconds, with a look that was as unbelieving as it was loving.

"Charlie you supposed know say, I be smart guy. See! I have already done my research, and I have a plan, on how to go about the whole deal." Wale was speaking to Kojo and Kwame on the balcony in a bid to convince them.

"So we are supposed to go to this location your contact will later give us, and wait for the employer to locate us, and after that, we will undergo some training, and testing to be qualified for the job. I hope I am correct Wale?" Kojo asked, his eyes and ears moving with his mouth.

"Yes you are very correct, Charlie you be smart guy, I knew you would get it," Wale replied, as he moved up and down, in excitement.

"*Bhra*, whatever you guys agree on, I'm game. I think I need some adventure," Kwame had a ridiculous smile on his face, Wale looked at him and burst into laughter, he then turned to Kojo, while pointing at Kwame.

"*This yah guy is on heroine, I fit set my life.*" It wasn't really funny for Kojo who has always had his fears about Kwame, being on hard drugs. Kwame was from a wealthy family just like Kojo, but his allowances always finished in less than a week, and he didn't smoke much, but he ended up looking high in just two pulls. However, it was only a suspicion because Kwame always said "*The highest I can take is weed.*"

The aroma from the kitchen drew the boys from the balcony to the kitchen,

where they met Akua already dishing out the food, she handed a plate of jollof rice to Wale, and another to Kojo, and then she and Kwesi carried the remaining plates to the room. They all settled down comfortably and enjoyed the meal.

"Wow, this tastes good, kudos Akua, "
Kojo muffled with his mouth full of rice.

"It was a joint effort, kudos to us both,"
Kwesi smiled at Akua. As they ate, they shared funny jokes that kept everyone smiling throughout the meal.

CHAPTER 3

On seeing Kwesi, Aunty Adjoa raised her two hands up mockingly.

"Sir, so you finally decided to come home today, I thought this place was too uncomfortable for you, I wasn't expecting your face any time soon, how long has it been? Yes, about two weeks if I remember correctly. Not a sign of you in this house, big man!" She clapped her hands as she spoke

"Fine boy, no money, no work," she sighed and turned to leave through the backdoor that Kwesi had entered from.

"Aunty good evening," Kwesi was very calm.

"Thunder fire that your mouth you use in pronouncing good! What is good about

this evening?" Aunty Adjoa replied and clapped again.

"See me see trouble ohh. Wait! Mr man, let me ask, have you gotten a job? Because this one that you are crawling into this house like a snail, looking like Oliver Twist, I hope it's not the same jobless self you have brought back to this house?" She held her left ear. *"I hope so ohh!"*

At this point, Nana Owusu walked in *"What is this noise all about, Adjoa? I could hear your voice from the entrance of this house, what is the problem?"* He looked at both of them sternly.

"Is it not this useless boy, this boy you wasted money meant for my children's comfort, just to see him through school, and yet he has nothing to

show for it, he still sneaks in and out of my house, as if I am married to him too." She was breathing like someone who had just climbed down from a hill.

"You still haven't answered my question, what has he done to warrant all the noise you are now making?" Aunty Adjoa, stood in silence for a while, she then tapped her leg and walked away. Kwesi who had been standing there, all along walked towards the table, took a sachet of water, drank from it, and said,

"Good evening Nana, I just got home now, I am a bit tired, I am going to sleep, good night sir." He didn't even wait for Nana Owusu's response before he gently walked into the room. Nana Owusu stood there, a little confused, wondering, if his wife Adjoa, was actually referring to Kwesi. He thought about this for a while,

shook his head, and went back to his room. Upon seeing Aunty Adjoa comfortably sitting on the armchair, he immediately asked, "*Adjoa? why won't you let this boy rest, why won't you give him peace of mind, whenever he comes home? Haven't you stopped to consider...*" Aunty Adjoa didn't even let him complete his statement.

"Ehh! Hold it there, don't provoke me. It is bad enough that for 23 years you have forced it down my throat to accept that boy as my son." She paused for a while, put her hand on her chest, and continued. *"...and now you want me to condone his laziness, to continue feeding him fat, from the little food I have reserved for my children,"* she spoke with venom

"What feeding are you talking about? This boy who barely stays at home, how many times does he eat from your pot? Besides, do you provide money for food in this house, if there is any food shortage in this house, tell me and I will bring out more money for foodstuff. Stop treating my son like a slave in his own father's house, he is still my first son."

"Remember that woman! Remember he is my first son, and should be treated as such." As he said this, he hissed and stormed out of the room leaving Aunty Adjoa grumbling.

Meanwhile, in a very dark corner of their tiny room, Kwesi sat quietly, he didn't want to turn on the lights so as not to wake his younger brother up, moreover, he could really use a dark, and quiet place at the moment. Many thoughts ran

through his mind. He remembered working so hard to graduate with a first class, and how he had never imagined himself still returning to his father's house just for accommodation purposes at this point. He had dreamt of coming with his own car, at least for a visit, with gifts for his siblings and money for his parents. Even though Auntie Adjoa who was his stepmother didn't like him that much, it didn't stop him from still regarding her as his mother. Crazy thoughts ran through Kwesi's mind, threatening to bring him to tears, but as the man that he is, he held himself, took a deep breath, and smiled. He then quickly remembered the business proposal Wale talked about. He wanted to call Wale that instant to find out more about the deal. He picked up his phone and made to dial the

number but he saw it was already 2 AM. As he made for the closet to change into his sleeping shorts, the lights suddenly came on.

"Oh! Did I wake you?"

"No, I just want to ease myself," Kofi, his younger brother replied. He made for the toilet, and by the time he came back to the room, Kwesi was already fast asleep. Kofi had hoped to bombard him with questions. He stared at Kwesi for a while as though he knew he was only pretending to be asleep. He smiled and turned off the lights. As soon as the lights went out, Kwesi's eyes opened, and he went back to his thoughts. He didn't want any conversation with his brother at that point, he knew for certain it would be all about answering questions he didn't have answers to. His thoughts wandered

The Gold Business

from place to place until sleep finally enveloped him.

CHAPTER 4

It was still early, and the sun wasn't scorching yet. Kojo, Kwame, and Wale were taking a walk along Tabora Road. As they walked, Wale seized the opportunity to pitch his business deal. "*Charlie, I am a well-connected guy, our security is on point, and what's good is the boss himself likes me, he has personally given me the opportunity to bring my friends on board. Bhra! This is an opportunity we must grab.*" He then pulled out his phone and started swiping past pictures of the latest models of cars to his friends.

"I am game, however it's going to be," Kwame said, his hands clasped over Wale in solidarity. "*We must decide now, if we really want to include Kwesi and Akua*

in this deal, for as we all know, Kwesi had already expressed his fears, and clearly shows he doesn't have the firmness we need for this deal, and as for Akua, we all know she is only but a woman, does she really need to be involved?" Kojo's voice was a little low as if he was afraid the air would carry his words to Akua.

"Oh yes! We definitely need Akua, she is a hard girl, and very bold, we need her Bro. As for Kwesi, I sincerely hope he decides to be part of this deal," Wale replied, he brought out two cedis from his pocket and paid for a pack of cigarettes he had just taken from the provision store they stopped at. As he made to light the cigarette, Kojo snatched it from him.

"Guy, we dey road. Don't smoke now."

The Gold Business

It wasn't so long, and the boys had already reached the T-junction, they took the left turn, and walked for about ten minutes, and soon enough, they were standing in front of an old uncompleted storey building, it looked abandoned, as though no one could possibly live in there. Kojo walked a bit closer to the building, picked a stone, and shot it at the most visible window on the first floor, suddenly footsteps were heard descending downstairs, and a tiny gate opened. Kojo quickly went to the gate, and the exchange was made, then the gate closed, as fast as it had opened. Kojo hurried back to join his friends, who were waiting for him a bit further away from the

building, he showed the bundle of weed to his friends. Their faces lit in smiles.

While at Kojo's place, Wale received a text message, as he read through the message, his face lit up in a warm smile

"Hey guys, Kwesi just texted me, he seems really interested in the deal, in fact, he wanted to know when we can make a move," Wale was excited. He really wanted all his friends to be part of the business.

"Okay then, that's nice, I guess that settles it, we are all doing this. So Wale, what's the way forward?" Kojo asked.

"I will be seeing my contact tomorrow, so he can arrange an appointment for us, but we should all be prepared, I might hit you guys up any moment for us to move."

Kwame's phone rang, he answered the call, and stood up immediately, "*I have to go now guys,*" turning to Wale he added, "*Bhra, do make sure you keep me posted on every move.*"

"*I got you, Bro,*" replied Wale, as he stood to shake him. "*Kwame keep your phone on. We should be able to reach you when it's time to move,*" Kojo said with a serious look on his face. He had to say it again because Kwame had a habit of never answering his calls or even keeping his phone on. "*I got you, bro, don't worry, my phone will be on,*" Kwame hurried to the door, but for some reason, the door was stuck, he tried to open it but it just wouldn't open, he kept trying for a while before Kojo and Wale who had been watching his struggle, came to help. They

both tried, but the door just didn't open. "*Where is the key?*" Kwame asked.

"*Which key?*" Wale asked right back. This got Kwame furious, he stared at Wale intensively for like five seconds. Wale was kind of surprised, he had never seen Kwame in such a mood before, "*Calm down Bhra, let's look for the key,*" Wale tried to calm him down. "Charlie we don't forget that key outside," Kojo could see the key outside from the kitchen window. "So what are we going to do now?" Kwame was restless as he pondered on the next step. "*Let me call one of my neighbours to come open the door for us,*" Kojo told him, "*Okay, cool, do that please,*" Kojo was able to reach someone to come help them open the door, and in less than two minutes the door was opened.

Kwame couldn't even wait to say a word to his friends, he jumped out as one who was being chased, to the astonishment of his friends, who exchanged suspicious looks.

"Bhra you don see Kwame like that before. That e look shock me o, I think he has a problem," as Wale spoke, his mind went to all possible reasons for Kwame's behaviour.

"We all have our issues," Kojo replied nonchalantly. Wale sensed Kojo didn't want to talk about the matter, so he immediately brought out a new pack of cards from his pocket and placed it on the table. *"Let's play a game,"* Kojo nodded. A short while later, they were already feeling sleepy, *"Let me sleep for a while,"* Wale said yawning and stretching his hands. *"Charlie, me too."*

Wale woke up with a start and tried to cover his eyes from the sun which had found its way into the room from the window directly above where his head was... Realising what time it was, he screamed. He tried to wake Kojo up, shaking and shouting his name but it appeared that he was trying to rouse a dead man. It was Kojo's way of sleeping. He hardly ever slept but when he did, it would take a legion of truck horns blasting above his head to wake him up. Wale rushed to the bathroom and washed his face. He got his phone from the table and tried to wake his friend up for the second time, so he could let him know he was leaving, but Kojo just would not budge. Wale realising Kojo wasn't waking up anytime soon, decided to take his

leave, he was in a haste, he had to run some errands for his father early that morning, and he was already late for that. Getting to his house, Wale could hear the noise from his father's car, his heart skipped, he knew for sure that he was late. The gates opened, and his father drove out, with such speed, as if to run him down, he quickly moved to the other side of the gate, and he stood there for a while wondering what could be running through his father's mind. His father had

specifically instructed him not to spend the night out, because he would be needing him early the next morning to run some errands. Wale's father was a hard man, he wasn't easily appeased whenever he was angry, so Wale knew he was in big trouble. Wale was not ready for any problem today at all. After standing at the gate for a long while, he went in, and his younger brother who had been standing

there waiting for him to come inside, closed the gate after him.

"Wale! Dad is really furious with you, he needed you to help him with the car this morning, and I think he is late for his appointment because you weren't around,"

"I know John, I saw the look on his face when he passed by."

"But, where have you been since yesterday, and where did you spend the night?"

"One question at a time," Wale answered him as he walked towards the door, and went straight to his room. He didn't want his mother to start her usual nagging, he had to reserve all his strength for his father's. He knew certainly some heat would be coming from the latter. He was about to take his bath when a call came in.

"*Sure Bhra, I will be there in thirty minutes,*"
Wale said to the person on the line. He hurriedly took his bath, and in a few minutes, he was rushing out of the house when his mother stopped him.

"*Wale! When did you return?*"

"*And why are you rushing out of this house like a man who just received a call from his pregnant wife?*"

"*Mom, I have an emergency, please! I will explain myself when I get back,*" Wale tried to dodge the questions as he quickly rushed out, his mother tried going after him, but he was just too fast, she couldn't catch a glimpse of him.

CHAPTER 5

"Bhra we go fit make something for chop noh," Kwesi was in the kitchen searching through the pots.

"No, I think we should just go buy some food, I have no provisions left," Kojo replied. He was sitting on the couch and going through his phone. *"Okay, that's better,"* Kwesi responded, joining him on the couch. A few minutes later, there was a bang on the door, and at once the handle of the door was shaking.

"Who is there?" Kojo asked.

"Charlie! Come open this door," a deep loud voice responded, one needed no soothsayer to tell it was Wale. Kwesi rushed to the door and opened it for him. As soon as he stepped inside, they hugged each other in excitement, and

Wale kept going on and on, with his signature loud voice.

"Is it time to make a move?"

"Smart guy, you can read the modes," Wale answered him in that loud voice of his. "I had a call with my contact a few minutes ago, and we are meeting the boss today, 8 pm sharp."

"That's cool by me," at this moment the smile on Kwesi's face had been deemed a little.

"Does it have to be at night?" Kwesi asked. "No! It has to be in the morning, I guess we are going for a church service," Kojo replied in a sarcastic tone.

"Kwesi! I don't understand your questions sometimes. Let me tell you, good transactions are done at night, this is a busy man we are going to see, he will

be free to attend to us, only at that time." Wale moved closer to Kwesi as he spoke.

"Oh *Bhra*, I get it, I am cool with it, I was just wondering..."

"Stop wondering, you have to be hard, if you will do this, remember it's gold business *Bhra*," Kojo interrupted him impatiently. Kwesi took a deep breath and quickly replied.

"I know."

"So, I guess we should contact the others, so they can make it on time, sure, great idea, let me text them," Kojo replied.

"Oh! no need, I already called them on my way here," Wale added.

In less than an hour, there was a knock on the door, and Akua entered, she was looking very bright and smart. Wale gave her his regular welcome shouts, he

stood up, hugged her, and complimented her for making it on such short notice.

"I can see you are really in for some gold business," Kojo said as he gave Akua a look that said he didn't want her there.

"It's a hard world, we need the money," Akua replied in a firm tone, she sat comfortably on the bed. It was about 5. pm, and there was no sign of Kwame, he had not left any message either. Wale asked Kojo to call him because they planned to leave the house by 6. pm, to combat the traffic, and get there on time. Kojo then tried calling Kwame, but his line was switched off, he tried again three times more, but his line was still switched off.

"Leave a message in case he turns his phone on later," Wale told Kojo. Akua

was already set to go, so she just lay on the bed browsing on her phone.

"Akua, can you please order Uber for us?"

Wale asked, before Akua could utter a word, Kojo said, *"No worries, I will do it."* He was already dressed. In less than thirty minutes, the car had arrived, and they all rushed downstairs. As they were about to enter the car, Akua screamed.

"Oh! I have left my purse in the room. Let me go get it." She rushed back upstairs to get it, but as soon as she got to the door, she remembered the keys were with Kojo downstairs. While she stood there confused, and thinking of going back downstairs, she suddenly heard footsteps coming up, it was Kojo He immediately opened the door, and after Akua had gotten her purse, he asked

"I hope you haven't forgotten anything again."

"No, I haven't." "Good then." They both returned downstairs, and the car took off.

They had not gone so far on their journey when Kojo's phone rang, it was Kwame calling.

"Where are you guys? I am at the house right now," Kwame said over the phone.

"You should get a taxi and follow us to Legon City," Kojo looked at Wale for confirmation.

"Sure bro, on my way now."

"It's a good thing Kwame is joining us, I almost thought he wouldn't make it," Kwesi said, the relief on his face was obvious. *"Yes, bro me too, I wasn't expecting him to show up anymore,"* Wale agreed.

"Kwame is like that, he always shows up, when you least expect him to," Kojo added relaxing himself on the back seat. *"Akua? Are you okay?"* Wale asked, he had noticed that she had been silent throughout the trip.

"Sure bro, I am good, just enjoying the ride."

They were stuck in traffic for a while, but in about an hour and thirty minutes, they arrived in Legon City.

"Where can I stop, please?" the driver asked. Kojo turned and looked at Wale who was supposed to answer that question, but he was in a deep sleep. A spank on his back woke him up as he stared at Kojo who had hit him.

"Answer the question, where are we stopping?" Kojo asked again.

"*Oh at Dragon Casino,*" Wale rubbed his eyes in an attempt to rid himself of all traces of sleep. Dragon Casino was just a few seconds ahead. When they dropped, there was an astonished look on their faces except for Wale.

"Why do you guys look confused, and surprised? What's up?" Wale asked.

"Bhra! You didn't mention that the venue would be Dragon Casino," Kojo spoke for others.

"So sorry I didn't, I actually thought I did oh!"

"See guys, this is it. We will be seeing the boss soon, and he happens to be the owner of this Casino, guys! This man will blow your mind, let's just relax and make a good impression."

"*Well! We are here, so let's just do this,*" Akua replied with a very carefree attitude. Kwesi drew closer to Wale and whispered in his ear. Wale thought for a while and patted Kwesi on the back.

"*Relax,*" before he could add another word, a tall slim dark handsome young man, came out of the Casino, he was dressed in a very expensive black suit, and as soon as he saw Wale standing outside with his friends, he immediately called out, "*Wale! what are you doing outside?*" He walked closer to Wale and continued.

"*Are these your friends?*"

"*Yes Sir, this is Kojo, Kwesi, and Akua,*" Wale pointed at each person as he introduced them.

"*Very good then, but I thought you were five in number, where is...*" Before he

The Gold Business

could even finish his sentence, a voice was heard from afar calling out to Wale.

"*Oh, that's Kwame,*" Wale waved at Kwame, who hurriedly joined them.

"*I guess that's the fifth one then.*" "Yes, Sir, *this is Kwame, he is one of us,*" Wale introduced Kwame, who was panting seriously from a twenty-second quick walk.

"*In that case let's all go inside,*" the man said, as he led the way.

PART TWO

**NOT EVERYTHING THAT
SHINES IS VALUABLE:
THOSE WHO WANT TO
LEAP MUST FIRST LOOK.**

CHAPTER 6

They walked right through the already-opened door, as soon as they entered, the door was shut immediately by the guard who had opened it. The first sight was a beautiful one to behold, there were just so many bright lights, and the people there were all fancily dressed.

"Can you please show my guests to table four, and please do attend to their every need," the man said to one of the waitresses who was passing by.

"Sure, Sir." Turning to Wale and his friends, he said, *"I will be with you shortly."* He left them and exited through a door just opposite them. Wale and his friends followed the waitress to their table. As soon as they were comfortably seated, their orders were taken by the

waitress who then left to go get what they ordered. When she was gone, Wale realised there had been some sort of tension amongst his friends since they first spotted the man in the black suit, "*Guys, the man you just saw, the one who brought us in, that's my contact, he is the one I have been talking to,*" Wale said.

"*Is that so? I thought as much,*" Kojo replied.

"*Well, I didn't expect the Casino to look like this, it looks more like a restaurant,*" Kwesi added with an honest smile on his face.

"*Oh no, this is not the Casino, this is the reception,*" Kwame replied. He was sitting so relaxed on the chair.

"*Bad guy! So you don't come here before,*" Wale said grabbing Kwame and shaking his shoulders excitedly.

"Leave me, bro, I have been here before, once or twice."

"That be hard oh," Kojo said with admiration. Meanwhile, Kwesi sat back relatively quiet. He kept imagining what the Casino actually looked like. While he was still in his thoughts, the waitress soon returned with their orders, except Akua's, she carefully placed the drinks, and wine glasses on the table, and apologised for the incomplete order.

"There are no cranberries, miss, can I get you something else," the waitress asked, *"Don't worry I am good, just get me a bottle of water,"* replied Akua, in a very calm manner, the waitress then left, and in less than five minutes, she returned with a bottle of water.

"Are you sure you will be okay, with just water?" Wale asked.

"Sure, water is good."

"Will you be needing anything else?" the waitress asked.

"No, thanks, I guess we are good," Wale answered, looking at his friends for confirmation. After the waitress had left, Akua who was sitting in between Kwesi and Kojo, stretched out her left hand and tapped Wale who seemed to be having an exciting conversation with Kwame.

"Wale, when are we meeting your boss?" Akua asked.

"Oh the boss, don't worry, pretty soon he will send for us," he went back to his conversation with Kwame. Akua wasn't much impressed by the elegance of the place so far, but remembering this was only the reception, she anticipated a more astonishing look. Kwesi had been silent all this while, he kept observing the whole

place, as his eyes moved from one end to another, one could tell, a lot was going through his mind. He soon noticed that most of the guests at the reception were gradually going through the door at the west end, he ignored this at first, but when the number of those waiting at the reception drastically reduced, he became a bit concerned, and turned to Wale.

“When are we meeting with the boss? We seem to be the last ones here.” It was then that Wale and the rest realised the number of those present at the reception had drastically reduced. Wale, Kojo, and Kwame had been busy with their football argument, and Akua was browsing through her phone. Wale then checked his wristwatch, and realised it was 9:30 pm. He then asked Kwesi to check his phone for confirmation, and for

sure it was 9:30 pm. Wale took out his small Nokia phone, and as he was about to make a call, a tall black man, who was dressed in the same manner as the man who had first received them, placed his hands on his shoulders from the back, and asked, *"Are you Wale?"*

"Yes, please."

"Then I guess these are your friends."

"Sure, Sir."

"Follow me," the man said, walking ahead. Wale urged his friends to quickly follow the man, there was clearly no time for questions. They all followed him through another opened door which was immediately closed by the guard who had opened it. They walked right through a long corridor, with dimmed lights, and soon, another door was opened. It was a pub, with multiple lights, and the

waitresses there were all putting on sexy red dresses, with their black heel shoes. The seats at the pub had white and gold colour, and each section had its own dancing space. This was nothing like what the boys had seen before, even Wale, and Kwame, who had been to the Casino before had never been to this section. The music wasn't so loud, and the place wasn't crowded either, just some few wealthy-looking people, seated in their own comfort, it looked more like a VIP section. As they moved Akua's eyes caught that of a popular celebrity in town, but since they were all moving in some kind of a cue, she ignored him.

Kwesi was a little worried as usual, he had thought they would go through the door at the west end like the others, but the man took them somewhere else, and

just when he thought that was it, they walked towards another door. The guard standing at the door was very huge, and he had a dreaded scar on his face which prevented one from looking at him twice. This time it was a smaller place, and the lights were all red. There were three young men of their age, already seated there.

"Take a seat, all of you, someone will be with you soon," the man said before he swiftly walked out. Wale and his friends greeted the three boys and sat down, it was more like a round table, and all the chairs were joined together.

They were all nervous, but in order not to show some weakness, they maintained a serious look. Kojo was kind of worried for Akua, but he couldn't show it, he just kept staring at her, to see if she

was alright, but Akua looked okay, she was still smiling at her phone, he felt relieved seeing her in that mood, but as his eyes caught hold of Kwesi, he noticed Kwesi was trembling. "Bhra, what's up, why are you trembling?" He asked, "*Man, the AC here is too high,*" Kwesi replied. Everyone looked at Kwesi and smiled, they knew it wasn't about the AC. As they all settled down in the waiting room, they tried to be comfortable with the red lights. Wale then tried to establish a conversation with the three young men they met there, but it wasn't so healthy as they didn't seem to care for a conversation. One of them had his eyes on Akua like he would swallow her whole if he got the chance. He just couldn't take his eyes off her, Akua had noticed it, but

she ignored him and pretended to be very busy with her phone.

Soon enough, a tall slim fair-skinned woman, dressed like Trinity in "The Matrix" entered the room, she looked stern and formidable. She had a medium-sized leather bag in hand. As she came in, she opened the bag.

"Everybody, drop your phone in here," her voice carried an air of finality. It was obvious she had no intention of explaining why they had to drop their phones. There was no hesitation, they all quickly dropped their phones, except Akua who tried asking why, but with the look on the woman's face, she just quickly dropped her phone. The woman then closed her bag, and left the room, before they could even look at each other, the lights changed from red to blue, and there

was this noise coming from underneath them like a plane about to take off.

Suddenly a door automatically opened at the extreme side of the room. One could never have imagined there was a door present there. A man casually dressed came through the door, he was of average height and looked like he was in his mid-forties. He sat comfortably on a chair placed on the right-hand side, not too far from the door that had just opened, the chair looked like it had been designed for a boss.

"Is that the boss?" Kojo whispered to Wale.

"Probably." Kojo looked surprised by this response, he thought Wale knew the boss, and that they were there based on the boss's invitation. He tried whispering to Wale again but was

immediately interrupted by the man who had just entered the room.

"Have you all been briefed on what we do, I mean the kind of business we are into here?" asked the man, in an unexpectedly accommodating voice.

"Not really sir," Wale replied.

"Do you speak for yourself or for everyone present here?" The man asked.

"No, sir, I speak for me and my friends. I am Wale, and this..." As he tried introducing his friends, one of the three boys came up, *"As for me and my brothers, we are totally aware of your kind of business. I am Ofori, and these are my brothers, Gyan, and Boamah."*

"Well, that's great, at least some of us know what we are here for," he turned to Wale and asked, *"Can you tell me what*

The Gold Business

you are here for?" There was some sort of silence for a while, as Wale stared at his friends who stared right back at him. Kojo took the lead.

"I am Kojo Sir, and if I can remember correctly, we are here for a gold business." Pointing to Wale he continued, *"My friend here can tell you more, we are all here because of him."* Wale choked on his saliva, and added, *"Oh yeah, he is right, we are all here for a gold business. Mr Smith had introduced it to me, he said I could bring my friends."* He stopped for a bit and continued, *"As a matter of fact, he was the one who brought us in."* He was more confident in speaking this time.

"Oh, you are the boy from Mr Smith."

"Yes Sir," replied Wale

"And these are your friends?" he asked again

"Sure Sir," he was more confident now.

"And you are here for a gold business?" he asked again.

"Certainly, Sir," Wale had expected the man to be contented with his response so far, but instead, the man laughed out loud, he looked at them and laughed even harder. It looked like, each time his eyes caught Wale's, he would just burst into another bout of laughter. This went on for over two minutes after which he then took a cigar, and a lighter from his left pocket and began smoking.

"Indeed! It's the Gold Business," he waved his hands above his nostrils.

"Gold is blood, and blood is money, and our business is where the money is," he had a solemn tone as he said this,

puffing smoke into the air, when he saw the look on the faces of Wale and his friends, he burst into another round of laughter.

"Oh my young friends, I am just pulling your legs. You see! We do a very lucrative business here, all you need to do is carry some little white stuff, from here to there and get paid handsomely," as he spoke, he kept putting on this tricky smile, and pulled his cigar, in the most passionate manner. At this point there was much silence in the room, one could immediately imagine what went through the minds of Wale and his friends. Kwesi kept staring at Wale intensively, as though he had been tricked by him, meanwhile, Wale couldn't look into the eyes of his friends, he too had a lot running through his mind. He cleared his

throat as one who was about to say something but hesitated. Akua who all this while had been relatively attentive to all the man had to say, suddenly spoke up.

"Sir, I certainly think your line of business is no place for a girl, I had hoped..." Before she could complete her statement, the man immediately cut her short.

"My pretty one, you are no girl, you are a bold young woman. Only female amongst eight men!"

"You are certainly the type we need." As the man spoke he wore the most pretentious smile, any dummy could tell he was not a person anyone should trust. Kwame who has been quiet and observant all along, stood up.

"Sir, I apologise for myself, and my friends. There certainly has been some

kind of misunderstanding here," he took a deep breath and continued. "It is quite obvious we didn't understand things before coming here. Can we please be

excused, so we could go think this through?" He joined his hands together, as he completed his statement.

"So you all want to be excused?"

"Yes, Sir!" they chorused, Wale's voice was the loudest.

"Not us, sir, we are totally ready," the three brothers protested.

As he listened to them, the man burst into another bout of laughter, and as he laughed he pointed at the ceiling. *"Read!"* he said, his voice was hard and bloodless. They immediately looked up the ceiling "ONE WAY IN, NO WAY OUT," was the inscription boldly written up there on the ceiling. Wale and his friends looked

at one another with fear in their eyes. They knew there was no way out for any one of them. The man suddenly stood up and said, "*You are smart people, I trust you will be of good behaviour. Though you might fancy me to be the boss, I'm not. Before you meet the boss, you must be ready.*" Turning to the three brothers, he smiled, and at once the door through which he came automatically opened again, and he went through, it immediately closed with the same noise it had made when it first opened, and the lights changed back into red.

There was total silence in the room, the three brothers kept smiling at Wale and his friends.

"I can see you guys didn't do any research before taking this step," Ofori

said, shaking as if he felt sorry for them. "*You heard the boss, be of good behaviour, because once you are in, you are in.*"

Gyan who had been sitting so relaxed, and staring at Akua all this while, turned to her, blew a kiss, and said, "*Don't worry love, I got you,*" he had this weird smile on his face as if he wasn't smiling, but just showing up his cream teeth. Kojo seemed to have had enough, he suddenly got up, grabbed Akua by the hand, and walked towards the door, Wale and Kwesi except for Kwame stood up to follow them. Kojo was still struggling with the door, as the door just wouldn't open, Kwesi himself tried it as well, but it just wouldn't open. They kept shaking the door handles angrily, when Kwame suddenly said, "*Don't waste your strength, you will sure*

need it," as he spoke he sat even more comfortably on the chair.

"Relax man! There will open the door soon,"

Boamah said. He was irritated

by their noise and attitude. Kojo, who couldn't remember when he took hold of Akua's hand, stood at the door in confusion, and suddenly let go of her hand slowly, he looked at his friends, and they all looked at each other.

CHAPTER 7

"Why will she not take her calls, I have been trying this girl's line for more than an hour now. Where could she be? Where did she even keep her phone? She didn't say she was sleeping out today" Mami was restless, moving from one end of the room to the other, and punching her keypad nonstop.

"Mami you said you were to bring home the ceiling fan today, but you came back with none, even with the windows open, there is just so much heat," Ama said, stretching her body on the bed. When Mami didn't pay her any attention, she called her name over and again but Mami's mind was far away in worry. Ama got up from the bed and went closer to her.

"What is it? Why aren't you sleeping," Mami in a very harsh manner.

"How can I sleep in this heat, and with you moving up and down the room?" Ama answered in her little humble voice. Mami then took a deep breath, sat on the bed and sighed.

"It was a strange dream. I saw several dogs surrounding your sister, and closer to your sister was a big snake, just lying beside her. She seemed very comfortable with the snake, but was terrified at the site of the dogs." She stopped to kill a mosquito that had perched on her leg...

"As I woke up from that dream, I checked the time, and it was 10 pm prompt. Since then I have been trying to reach your sister, to find out if she is ok, but she won't take her call, her phone has

been ringing but she wouldn't answer. Now, it's switched off." She stood up and tried dialing the number again.

"Mami don't worry, Akua will be fine, this isn't the first time she has stayed away from the house at night without informing us. I know my sister, she is a strong girl, she will be alright," Ama got closer to her mother and took the phone from her hand.

"Try and get some sleep Mami," but Mami was still very disturbed, she managed to climb on the bed, but just couldn't sleep.

"My dear, please go get the fan from the sitting room," instructed Mami, Ama at once hurried to the sitting room and got the fan. She immediately set the fan, and there was some cool air in the room. It wasn't so long and she was fast

The Gold Business

asleep while Mami just couldn't sleep, she was still stuck in her thoughts.

CHAPTER 8

"For how long are we going to sit in these red lights, and wait for them to open the door?" Akua asked. She was restless.

"We don't even know what time it is," she added, with a voice that appeared broken. Wale checked his wristwatch. *"Oh my God! It's 1:15 am."* While he was feeling astonished by what time it was, the door suddenly opened, and Mr Smith walked in with a big black handbag. Wale felt a sense of relief upon seeing Mr Smith, but it wasn't for long, as Mr Smith didn't even look at his face twice. He dropped the bag on the ground, and said, *"Take off your clothes."* While pointing to the bag he added, *"In there are what you will all wear,"* he walked back towards the door, and as he was about to leave, he turned back and glared at them.

"You have fifteen minutes." The three brothers immediately opened the bag and began searching through for their own outfits, the clothes in the bag were all alike, there were all White long-sleeved tops and white long trousers, they searched through and got their desirable sizes, and in less than four minutes all three of them were standing all dressed in white, " *Oh man! You look good,*" Boamah said to his brothers, who replied with funny laughter.

"Your turn guys, get your own outfits," Ofori said.

"There is no way I am getting my clothes off, and wearing this..." Akua muttered.

"I totally agree with you," Kwesi said, nodding his head. Kwame who had been so relaxed on the chair suddenly

walked closer to the bag and began taking out his own outfit.

"*What are you doing?*" Kojo asked him

"*I am taking a bath,*" he continued searching through the bag. When he got his desired size, he stood up and said to Kojo, "*Bhra, you can clearly see I am trying to get my own outfit. Remember we have only ten minutes left, I advise you guys to start getting dressed.*"

At this point, Wale immediately got a pair from the bag and tried convincing, his friends to do the same, but with the look on Kwesi's face he held his breath, Kojo went to the bag, got three pairs, and handed one to Akua, and another to Kwesi. Akua collected it, shot it on the ground, and firmly said, "*I am not wearing this. There is no way I am playing by the rules of a game I do not understand. I am not*

trafficking drugs, I do not want to carry drugs, I thought it was a gold business."

It appeared as though she was crying, but there were no tears coming from her eyes, as she spoke she ran to the door to check if it was opened, and it was. She tried going out but met with the huge guard who was still standing at the door, Akua was determined to leave, so she ignored the guard's dreadful face. She tried leaving when the guard suddenly carried her back inside, she bit him on the neck. Kojo was so irritated by the guard's behaviour with Akua that he punched him in the face. The guard became furious and a fight ensued between them.

Wale and Kwesi immediately jumped in to help their friend, but just one punch from the guard had Kwesi bleeding from the nose. Kwame immediately took

the biggest table he could carry and hit the guard on the head, he stood still for a while and soon passed out. They all stood there confused when the three brothers quickly ran out of the room.

"What are we still waiting for? Let's get out of here." Akua said grabbing Kwesi who was still struggling with his bleeding nose. They all ran out of the room and walked into the pub. It was more crowded this time around, so they easily smuggled out, and soon came to the corridor, there were so many doors, they just couldn't remember which one they came through. They kept trying the door until Kwesi tried the one to his left which surprisingly opened.

"This way," he said.

They were soon standing in a very bright room, which Kwame recognised.

"Over there, the door at the right, that's the washroom, and the door at the left takes you straight to the Casino."

"Oh yeah, you are right, that's the washroom door," Wale affirmed. Kwesi and Akua immediately rushed into the washroom to clean the blood off his nose.

"What are we standing here for? If that's the casino door, then let's just go right through it, I mean at the casino there are many random people. We could just walk right through and get out of this place," Kojo said anxiously.

"Yeah, that's our only option right now," Wale replied slowly, *"but what are we going to do about the guards? There are two guards constantly standing in front of that door,"* he added while

pointing to the door, *"I don't know, we just got to try. I mean we can't stay here much longer, they could come for us,"* Kojo said, he was walking towards the washroom to fetch Akua and Kwesi. Before he got to the door, they had come out. Akua immediately tried opening the casino door but Wale stopped her.

"We need to strategise on how to get past those guards, everyone who gets in the casino is registered. They will know for sure we didn't come through the main door. They could raise the alarm," he said, feeling clueless. He heaved and made to speak again when Kwesi interrupted him.

"This is all your fault, Wale, so find a way out for us."

"You can't blame me, I had no idea it was drugs."

"Really! You had no idea? If I remember correctly, you said there is no legality in business, so how am I sure you didn't cook this up?" Kwesi was fuming.

"Come on, man! I was just trying to be hard when I said that." Before Wale could say another word, three guards came in through the door they had just opened, among them was the one Kwame knocked out with a table. He was still holding his bleeding head. The look in his eyes was dangerous. There was no time to think anymore, they opened the door and ran into the casino. Luckily for them, the guards were a little distracted, so before they could notice, Wale and his friends ran past them and headed straight to the door. It was easy for them to get away because their running caused such panic and distraction in the casino.

The presence of the fierce-looking guards was enough to frighten some women who started running out. With this new development and everyone running towards the door, it was easy for the five friends to mingle with the crowd and find their way out of the place.

As soon as they were out of the casino, they ran as fast as their legs could carry them, they soon noticed they were still being followed by different guards. It was very late and no vehicles came along. As soon as Akua spotted a red car driving towards them, she started screaming out loud and waving her hands frantically. Her friends joined her to wave. Eventually, the car stopped for them, and before the driver could utter a word, they all hopped inside, packing themselves like sardines in the passenger seat. Kojo sat in the front

seat with the driver who kept looking at him for instructions.

“*Just drive!*” Kojo screamed at the driver as if he was the cause of their problem. The driver needed no further instructions, especially as the others had also joined Kojo in screaming ‘Drive!’ The driver sped off, driving without questions. In no distant time, Kojo noticed a black car approaching them with such a high speed.

“*Charlie e be like they dey follow us,*” he said to the others at the back. The driver must have noticed it too. As soon as the black car caught up with them and made to block the road, the driver did something extraordinary. He made a reverse and immediately took off at such a high speed that they all screamed. Then, he took an unusually rocky road and continued at that speed until it was clear

that the black car had lost them. The driver was almost out of breath.

"What have you young people gotten yourself into?" he asked them, turning his attention to the people at the back.

"Oh, Sir! It's kind of complicated, it's really just a big misunderstanding," Wale answered, shaking like a leaf.

"Being followed by Don Nicholas' men is more than just a misunderstanding," the driver said. A closer look at him, and Akua realised he was really an old man. She wondered how he could have driven at such a high speed, considering his age.

"Sir, we went there for a gold business. Well, at least that's what we thought, but instead, they wanted us to traffic drugs. We certainly had no idea what we were getting into," Akua replied

sharply. "*Sir, please! You must help us go to the police, I think our lives are in danger,*" she was looking at him with pleading eyes as she spoke. The old man took a deep breath, drove a little further, and soon entered, an ancient-looking compound, the building was made of white concrete stones, and there were trees planted all around. He packed the car, and slowly stepped out.

"*What are you all still doing in there,*" the old man asked them.

"*Where is this place?*" Kojo asked the man, he was suspicious of everything and anything.

"*Somewhere, not easy to find,*" the old man answered him.

"*The police can't help you,*" he was turning the door knob as he spoke. When the door opened, Akua and the others

gaped at the beauty of the inside. The pieces of furniture didn't look quite old, and the whole place was a little dusty as if no one had been inside the house for some time.

"Take a seat, you all make yourselves comfortable," he told them. He sat down wearily in one of the armchairs. *"You see, I said the police can't help you, because Don Nicholas is a very influential man, he has most of the police officers in this area on his payroll. Anything that will implicate him always ends up thrown away."* As he spoke he pulled out a sachet of whiskey from his chest pocket and began drinking.

"How do you know all these sir?" Kwesi's suspicious antenna was up again. *"Yes. How do you know all this,"* Kojo asked too.

"I am an old man, I have spent my whole lifetime in these parts, I know a lot," he sluggishly moved to the cupboard, opened and brought out a bottle of whiskey, and another bottle of wine. He returned to his seat, *"Go get some wine glasses from the cupboard over there my dear,"* he said to Akua while pointing to the cupboard. Akua immediately did as she was told. The old man opened the bottle of whiskey, poured some for himself, and urged the boys to have some.

"Thanks, Sir, but we will pass, I don't think any of us is in the mood for some alcohol right now," replied Wale respectfully

"Oh, what a waste! Five young people. Who goes to a casino in search of greener pastures, but cannot drink? " He laughed at them.

"Okay! You can have the wine, it's a good French wine from the 1960s, and the alcohol is really less," he added. Kwame then got a wine opener from the table and opened the wine, he poured some for himself and his friends and took his seat.

PART THREE

**WHERE COMES A
SOLUTION,
RESOLUTIONS FOLLOW**

CHAPTER 9

"You all look very young, I don't think any of you is above twenty-five. I believe you still have plenty of time to build a better career if you work hard enough. Now tell me, why will you go into a casino for a business deal with a drug baron?" He looked at them with eyes that seemed to say he knew who they were.

"It's all Wale's fault sir. He tricked us, sir," Kwesi replied with spite, angrily pointing at Wale for easy identification.

"I did not trick anyone. I was as clueless as any of you. Mr Smith told me it was a gold business, that we would be moving gold, and not drugs." As he spoke, he looked quite downcast.

"But Bhra, you said you knew the boss, apparently that was a lie," Kojo added.

"Yes, I don't actually know him, but Mr Smith said he spoke to the boss about me, and the boss said I could get my friends involved," Wale stammered as he spoke.

"So you lied to us about knowing the boss," Kwesi responded. If eyes could kill, his would have killed Wale.

"Enough okay? Enough with the blame, what's done is done, let's just look for a way out of this," Kwame's tone was firm as he spoke.

"Kwame is right, we can't just sit here and blame Wale. I mean, we are all to blame," supported Akua said.

"What do you mean by we are all to blame Akua?" Kwesi asked Akua, he looked like he was well near the limit of his tolerance. "If we did our research, if we thought it through, then, just maybe we would have found out what we were

getting ourselves into," Akua said with a very serious tone, as though to say she would not accept any other explanation for what they did.

"We should please not blame anyone right now, because it won't help," she said with an air of finality. It looked like she would cry if she spoke further. The old man had been quietly observing everyone as Akua spoke to them.

"The young lady is right, you are all to blame. Let me ask, when your friend Wale brought up his proposal, did any of you stop to think it through? Did you try asking him pertinent questions, and trying to get proof? Did you even ask about the venue of your supposed business meeting?" When no one responded, he shook his head. *"You see, I can go on and*

on with the questions, and at the end of it all, you will all realise you took the decision together, and should take responsibility for whatever the outcome is."

"I am still wondering. What's the desperation with you young people nowadays, you are all just in so much hurry to acquire wealth. Why do we always lose our sense of patience so early?" He made to continue speaking before Kwesi suddenly stood up. "We have lost our sense of patience, Sir, what other kind of patience is there to have when you graduate from the University with a first-class degree in accountancy, and cannot get a job, after searching for three conservative years? He smiled at the ceiling and continued.

"They say, work hard to graduate with a first-class, go for internships in all your breaks, endeavour to partake in volunteer services, all of this will boost your CV. These things, we were told are the keys to our success." He stood still for a while as tears were already running down his cheeks, he tried to clean his face, but the tears were already visible.

"I believed so much, that all I needed to do, was to study, be good at what I do. I sacrificed every leisure time to invest in my education. All those times in school, all I had in mind was how to make my father proud - to get a good job after graduation, and put honest smiles on his face, to flatter my step-mother with gifts, so maybe after all these years, she can finally accept me as part of the family, to help my father in sponsoring my siblings'

education. To..." he held his breath for a while and continued in a louder tone, *"Yes, I am only but 25, too early to lose hope, but then I graduated four years ago, and ever since I have dropped more than five hundred job applications, have been to several different interviews, I have been taking other professional courses, but still same story. No job,"* he sighed "No job," as he spoke he knelt on the floor, put his hands on his neck, and kept grumbling. Akua stood up, went to him, and tried consoling him.

"I feel you, bro, I understand exactly how you feel, I do understand, you might think you're in a really dark place right now, but you have no idea, what I have to put up with, every day," she stopped, went back to her seat,

relaxed on the chair, and started telling her own story.

"My mother starved herself sometimes just to see me through school. I wasn't from a rich home, but I never lacked anything in school." She laughed.

"You know, I will always pray before every exam, and my prayer point would be, to make my mother proud. As a single parent, she catered for us, with all she got, not for once did Mommy complain, she was always contented."

At this point, Akua burst into tears. After a while, she managed to hold herself and went on.

"Even when the system wouldn't give me a job, three years after graduation, Mommy still wouldn't complain, she instead encouraged me to be patient. She still wants to take care of me, and now Mommy is sick, and we need

money for her treatment." At this point, she was no longer able to control herself.

"How can I be patient, when my mom is dying?"

At this point, Kojo rushed to console her, he held her and urged her not to cry. Kwesi slowly stood up from the floor and took his seat. Wale was shedding tears. The old man adjusted his seat, he knew the stories were just starting.

"Akua, why didn't you say anything about your mother's health?" Kojo asked, he was still holding Akua who had stopped crying.

"It's a lot of money, I just didn't know how to start talking about it, and Mommy didn't want people finding out about her health," she replied, wiping her face with the paper towel Kwesi gave her.

"Oh Akua, I should have been a better friend, I should have listened to you more, all those times you were sad -all those times you were worried, constantly absent-minded. I am so sorry you had to go through all this alone," Kojo said. He helped her relax on the chair and then went back to his seat.

"I think my only problem has been pride - too proud to apologise to my father, for something I clearly did wrong. I just wanted to prove to him that I could not make it on my own, without his money or connections. But the truth is I do need it. Listening to Kwesi, and Akua has made me realise how lucky I am, and that I need to be more grateful to my parents." He shook his head sadly as he spoke.

"I am a mess, my parents were right all along, I never do anything right, I just

always want to do things my way. I keep complaining about my father's attitude towards me, how he won't trust me to be part of his business, but I don't even deserve to be trusted," Wale said, he was crying like a baby, his words sounded distant and muffled in between the sobs. He quickly wiped the tears that streamed down his face and continued speaking. *"I dropped out of school to follow my path, which has clearly brought no success my way, I kept ignoring all the advice my parents gave me. They advised me to stop hanging around with certain company lest I get myself into trouble, and they were right, for I have not only gotten myself into trouble but my friends too."* At this point, he broke down again, but this time, no tears were flowing from his eyes.

"Guys, I am so sorry!"

"It's okay Wale, we totally understand," Kwesi said, patting him on the back. All this while, Kwame has been lying back on his seat relatively quiet, the old man cleared his throat.

"Wow that was quite a moment, allowing yourselves to pour out your heart like that is extremely great, that's the first step to recovery."

Turning to Kwame he asked,

"My boy, don't you have anything you will want to share with your friends?"

"No, sir, nothing at all,"

"Okay then, in that case..." he paused as he tried to take off his jacket. While he was doing this, Kojo spotted a tattoo on his arm. It was a huge heart encrypted with many different languages. "Wait a minute, I know this tattoo," he moved closer to the man to have a closer look at the tattoo.

"*Oh my God!*" He looked at the man from head to toe,

"It is you. I knew it, there was something special about you when you drove..." he paused, then screamed in excitement. *"Daddy Wumba! Oh my my! Guys this is Daddy Wumba!"* In his excitement, Kojo embraced the man. Wale came closer to check the tattoo himself.

"I knew it, I was wondering who this G is" Kwesi added, observing the tattoo too. Kwame seemed excited but he was not in the mood to feel all bubbly. He just smiled and continued relaxing in his seat. As for Akua, she could not recognise who the man was because she wasn't really a fan of his genre of music. *"Sir, it is an honour to be with you here,"* Kojo said. *"Indeed an honour, sir,"* Kwesi agreed. The man laughed heartily.

"Take your seats my boys, and I am pleased to meet you all too." They all went back to their seats. Kwame was the most curious of them all, so he didn't hesitate to ask the man questions.

"What happened, Sir? The story we heard was that you suddenly stopped releasing songs after your grand show in..." he

tapped his head, trying to remember something.

"Legon City, yes it was Legon City," Wale helped him out.

"Oh yeah, Legon City," Kwame affirmed. They all stared back at Daddy Wumba, waiting for his answer.

He was quiet for a while, then, he took a deep breath.

"It was time to stop," he poured more whiskey into his glasses as he spoke.

"Life isn't what it seems, there are things I wish I should have done differently, advice I wished I had hearkened to." At this point, he lay back on the chair and went on.

"It was a Thursday afternoon. I tell you, it wasn't such a good day, there was less hope in the air, I had no cash left on me, we were in the studio about to finish my debut album, and we had run out of tapes, what can one do? I certainly needed to finish that album. At first, it was the tape that bothered me, but then I remembered I didn't even have money to release my album when it was done, I had lost all patience. I wasn't getting any younger, and all the friends I started doing music with, had successful careers going on for them, and it wasn't as if they were more talented than myself. I had

tried reaching out to some of them to help me, but all I got were promises and more promises. I had to do something. I had to release my album and enjoy the fame. DJ Banku was already fed up with me because I owed him a lot of money. That night as he worked with me, he suddenly stopped and gave me a long hard stare.

He said ‘*Why do you choose to be an underground artiste all your life.*’ At first, I was surprised because he knew how hard I had been working. He then told me to get sponsors, he knew very well that I had also been doing my best to get sponsors.

At that point, he told me about how I could get a sponsorship deal with one of the barons in the casino.” Daddy Wumba stopped talking and downed another shot of whiskey. He winced and then continued talking. Everyone paid him rapt attention.

“I knew all the influential rich men that visited the casino were drug barons, and I didn’t want to get myself entangled with them. So, I refused to heed his advice at first, but when he told me that he would stop working with me on the project if I failed to get a sponsorship deal, I decided to go to the casino with him.

When we got to the Casino, it looked like it was our lucky day, for the whole place was filled with big names, DJ Banku seemed to be popular there, he greeted everyone we passed by, as the waiter took us to our seats. We ordered drinks, and as soon as we started drinking, he excused himself. As I looked around the casino, I recognised one of my classmates who was now a big boy in town. I prayed he would not recognise nor

acknowledge me because I was not in the mood for questions. When DJ Banku came back, he had such a huge smile on his face. ‘Don Carlos wants to meet you’ he said. Don Carlos was a very big name at the time. Rumour had it that their family built Legon City. I was kind of in a dilemma because I had never imagined that I would sit with such a personality, not to talk of getting acquainted with him. It all seemed to happen so fast and before I knew what had happened, I followed DJ Banku to a private section where Don Carlos was seated in all his elegance. He was a good-looking man, finely dressed in a very luxurious clean outfit. He sat between two men in black tuxedos. When he saw us, he waved at the guard to let us through to his side of the section. *‘Take a seat, young*

man,' he said as we approached him. Soon after he dismissed DJ Banku, *saying 'Your job here is done, now, let me have a word with the young man.'*

Daddy Wumba stooped and motioned to Kwesi to get him a glass of water. When the water was brought to him. He drank it like one who had not seen water in ages. He cleared his throat, looked at the faces that were peering at him, then smiled, and continued with his story.

He asked his attendant to pour some whiskey for me, and requested a toast, when I held out my glass, he asked me *'What should we toast to?'* I was stammering for a while. 'To fame' he said loudly. I smiled as we toasted to fame. I was feeling quite uncomfortable with his friendly disposition. It seemed too good to

be true. As we talked, he asked for my name. When I told him my name was Wumba, he said *'Daddy Wumba, that will be your new stage name, for the impact you will make will transcend generations.'* He raised another glass with the two gentlemen sitting next to him, and said, *'Let's toast to the new big thing in the music industry, Daddy Wumba!'* We all toasted happily, but my smiles weren't honest. All the while, I had been feeling uncomfortable with the whole thing. It didn't make sense that such an influential man would be willing to assist me even though he barely knew me. Everything moved so fast before I knew what was happening, he told me he would send his manager to me the next day and we would commence work immediately. I later left the casino with DJ Banku. He was so

excited. He said he knew we would make it. I had a lot of questions in my mind, so many things I needed to figure out, but my desperation had the better hold of me.

When I hurried back home that day, I told my sister everything. She advised me to take things slowly and understand the terms and conditions Don Carlos would state in exchange for the help he was offering me. She wasn't comfortable with how quickly DJ Banku was able to pull the strings, it smelt like a fishy movement. She turned to me and said, "*Brother you are talented, and you are working hard, slowly but surely you will get there,*" Indeed, I had also thought of everything she said to me, but at the time, my mind was made up and no advice would have stopped me. All I looked forward to was my meeting with Don

Carlos's manager. I managed to fall asleep and early the next morning I rushed to the music studio, to my greatest surprise, before I got to the studio, a man was already waiting for me, he introduced himself to me as Mr Mbah from Don Carlos, and that he was going to be my new manager. From then on, my music became the talk of the entire country, I got the fame I wanted, and yet I had not spent a dime from my own pocket.

Everything was sponsored by Don Carlos. My team increased, and I had a good life. But since that first day, I didn't get to see Don Carlos, whenever I requested to see him, he would be in one meeting or the other, or he would be out of the country. Suddenly I received a call one Saturday morning from Don Carlos, telling me we would be meeting that

same night at the casino." Daddy Wumba stopped talking. He stretched himself, peering at the eyes that were staring right back at him, he could tell they were dying of curiosity...

"Sir please don't stop, what happened next?" Akua asked, they were all invested in the story. Daddy Wumba took a drink again and went on

"We met at the casino. To my surprise this time, some of the people working in my band were there. I wasn't expecting them to join us for the meeting. I thought it would be just me, Don Carlos, and maybe my manager. Anyway, when Don Carlos saw me, he greeted me with a kiss, and said 'You have done so well in your craft, I am proud of you.' Then he told me that I would be going on a music tour in two weeks. This came as news to me

The Gold Business

because I had no idea that there was any preparation for me to go on tour. What he said next confirmed the fears I had about his benevolence from the very beginning. He said to me ‘The good news is, you will finally start making your own billions.’ He then told me to come with him. I followed him to a room full of white substances. Even though I had never seen cocaine before, I knew exactly what it looked like. Don Carlos held my hand and said ‘Welcome to the Gold business.’ At that point, I knew there was no going back. From then on, my tours became a facade for drug trafficking. I continued with this for three years until my younger sister became sick. She was the only sibling I had, at the time she had lung cancer. I spent millions trying to treat her and flew her abroad to be treated by the best

hands, but despite all my efforts, she still died in my arms. My money could not save my only sister. Daddy Wumba held his breath at this juncture and used his handkerchief to clean his eyes. He took a deep breath and continued with his story. 'Seeing my sister's body made me realise one thing, that everything in life was vanity. I was done with the business. I wanted out. I went to Don Carlos to tell him my decision to disassociate myself from the cartel, he laughed at me and told

me if I needed time off to grieve my sister's passing, it's totally understandable, 'but no one leaves the cartel,' Don Carlos said. I was more than determined to leave, so I asked him, 'What can I do to leave? I want out of the Gold business,' I said. 'Death, only death my boy,' he said, very quietly as he walked away. I stood there confused and enraged, but I held myself, for experiences had made me strong. I went back home and cooked up a plan. The last show I did at Legon City, was part of that plan, I worked hard for it to be big so I could buy some time to flee from the cartel, for I knew they were never letting me go. After that show at Legon City, so much money was raised, and it was the talk of the town, it was very clear my team and I needed some rest, so I used that opportunity to

flee from the cartel, and Don Carlos. I stayed away for twelve years until I heard of Don Carlos' death eight years ago. For twelve years I lived in exile hiding from anyone or anything that could link me to Don Carlos. That is why no one heard of me again after the grand show at Legon City, the media kept making money off my work, even though some people suspected I was dead, but they had to keep their thoughts to themselves because the media needed people to believe I was very much alive."

Daddy Wumba was done with his story, he relaxed on the chair and closed his eyes, as if to take a nap. Suddenly, he turned to Kwame with a hard stare.

"Where did you get that outfit from?" Daddy Wumba asked, motioning to Kwame to come closer *"Oh sir, I got it*

from our time at the casino, they wanted us all to put this..." Kwame was still speaking when Daddy Wumba jumped up and started pulling off the shirt from Kwame's body.

"Take it off right now!" he ordered. Kwame hurriedly took it off and was left with just his boxes, Daddy Wumba hurriedly took it outside, poured some whiskey on it, and burnt it. Kwame and the others all stood there surprised wondering what was going on. "There was a tracker on that outfit," Daddy Wumba said. He soon entered the room and brought something else for Kwame to wear. *"How did you know there was a tracker in there Sir?"* Akua asked.

"Because I had worn one before," he answered as he rummaged through his cupboard in search of something. "Don

Nicholas is Don Carlos's son, it's family business," Daddy Wumba said, they gasped at this new information.

"What are you looking for, Sir?" Kojo asked him anxiously, for Daddy Wumba was really serious in his search.

"This," he had a small diary in his hands. *"Here is my contact book, I need to call someone, at least the only one I know can help, for certainly Don Nicholas's men will be here, sooner or soonest,"*

"But we already burnt that outfit, how then can they locate us?" Akua's heart was pounding in fear.

"That's just to slow them, they will certainly follow the lead they have so far." He was now looking through his diary, peering closely until he found the number he was looking for. He then called Wale to help him call out the number, so he could

dial it on his phone. As he made the call, he spoke in a distinct dialect with whoever was on the phone, and by the time he was done, there was so much tension in the room they were all sitting in. "*What do we do now?*" Kwesi asked

"*We wait,*" *Wale* looked at the clock on the wall, and it was 5:30 am.

They all sat down quietly, each person's heart beating faster than usual.

In less than thirty minutes, they heard a car parking outside. They were all beside themselves with fear until Daddy Wumba looked through the window. As he saw who their visitor was, he smiled and opened the door. "*Who is it, Sir?*" Akua asked.

"*A friend.*" He went outside and returned with his friend, the man looked just as old as Daddy Wumba. As he

walked in, he smiled at everyone, went straight to the table, poured some wine for himself, and began drinking.

"This is my friend and brother, DJ Banku."

"The same DJ Banku, who introduced you to Don Carlos?" Akua asked him in shock. The others had their mouths wide open. DJ Banku stared at Daddy Wumba with wide eyes.

"Oh! boy, who are these young fellows, and how did they get to know our story?" That's not why I have called you here, these young fellows you see here, have gotten themselves entangled with Don Nicholas's men, actually I saved them from being caught earlier this morning. They have shared their stories with me, and I want us to help them off the hook."

"Have they been to the red room?" DJ Banku asked. Wale immediately looked at his friends, they were all exchanging glances in confusion. *"Sir, I don't know which red room you are talking about, but we were in a room with red lights,"* Kwesi said, looking directly at Daddy Wumba.

"One of them had the costume on, certainly there were in the red room," Daddy Wumba said impatiently.

"I am sure they are searching for this place as we speak," he added.

"Sir, please help us, we were totally clueless about what goes on down there," Akua pleaded as she moved closer to DJ Banku. *"No worries, I will talk to Don, and get him to call off his men."* While they were still talking, three vehicles pulled up in front of the house. As soon as Wale and the others saw them, they began to tremble in fear. In all of this ruckus,

Kwame's looks were changing, and no one noticed.

"Calm down, there is nothing to worry about," DJ Banku told them when he saw the fear in their eyes. He and Daddy Wumba stepped outside to meet the men who had entered the vehicles while the others stayed inside. Akua suddenly noticed the change in Kwame's looks and rushed to his side.

Kwame, what is wrong? What's happening to you?" There was terror in her voice as she spoke. It was then that their other friends noticed what was going on.

"Bhra, what is wrong with you?" Kojo asked him, his brows creased as he peered closely at Kwame.

"Nothing. Just a little tired.

“This doesn’t look like nothing, we need to get him to the hospital,” Akua countered.

“No, just take me home,” Kwame’s eyes looked at her with so much pain and discomfort as he spoke. His friends were confused, they did not know what to do.

Kojo rushed outside to call for help, but instead, he got a gun pointed at his head.

“Ehhh! Drop the gun, he is my boy, he is totally harmless,” DJ Banku said to the man. He immediately dropped the gun. Kojo tried to explain his friend’s condition but the man who had pointed the gun at him earlier shut him up.

“Keep your mouth shut until I am gone!” the man thundered at him. Kojo immediately recognised him, it was the same man who had addressed them in the red room. Kojo kept quiet as was instructed. DJ Banku, Daddy Wumba, and

the man exchanged handshakes, smiling and chatting as they walked him back to his vehicle, before he could utter a word, Kwesi rushed out shouting. "*Kwame is dying!*" They all rushed back into the house to find Kwame, reeling in pain.

"We should take him to the hospital," Akua cried. Kwame was still in pain but he somehow managed to keep muttering. "*No, just take me home, please.*"

"Let's take him home," Daddy Wumba said, grabbing his keys off the centre table. He instructed Kojo and Wale to carry Kwame to the car. Akua and Kwesi also wanted to come along. "*No, we'll just take him home and be right back. I need you two to stay behind. We'll be right back.*"

CHAPTER 10

Daddy Wumba drove as fast as he could, with Kojo's directions. They had to follow a shortcut because it was already 8 am and the morning traffic would have delayed them. Wale tried to console Kwame who kept groaning in pain. It was as though something was stabbing him throughout the ride. They drove for over forty minutes before they got to Kwame's house. They honked at the gate, but no one opened the gate for them. Kojo had to come down and get in through the small gate. He met Kwame's mom.

"Ah ah, Kojo, what is it?" she asked. Clearly, she was not expecting anybody that morning, especially not him, "Mom, it's Kwame. He's acting strange."

"Where is he?" She quickly followed Kojo, but before they could get outside they met Daddy Wumba, and Wale already helping Kwame to the house. The mother called out to Kwame's younger brother, who came along to help her carry him to his room, Wale and Kojo wanted to help in bringing him to his room but his mom hesitated. "We will take it from here, thank you so much, you have done enough," she said, shutting the door behind her. Wale and Kojo stood there, in confusion, "Let's get back to the others, he will certainly reach out to you all when he recovers," Daddy Wumba said. They got back into the car and drove off.

"Have you guys never seen him like that before?" he asked them during the ride.

Wale and Kojo shook their head in response.

“Kwame behaves strangely sometimes, but we have never seen him this way,” Kojo answered.

“Or maybe he didn’t want you people to see.”

As soon as Akua and Kwesi heard the car parked outside, they immediately ran towards the car.

“How is Kwame? What happened? Is he doing fine?”

“The boy will be fine, he is with his family now,” Daddy Wumba replied. Inside the house, DJ Banku was feeling at home, eating some yam that he had made Akua cook for him.

“Bhra, you need to taste this,” he said, offering some yams to Daddy Wumba.

“No, thanks, man.” Daddy Wumba appeared exhausted as he sank into the armchair where he had sat earlier. He

called out the the young people who were still sitting down, idling in their thoughts.

“With the help of my friend here,” he pointed to DJ Banku who had a mouthful of yams. “I have been able to let you off the hook. Don Nicholas men will no longer come after you. You’re free to go home.” The squeal from Akua brought a smile to his face. The friends hugged themselves, they were truly thankful to be free.

“Thank you so much, Sir!” they chorused.

“How can we ever repay you?” Akua asked him.

“I’ll tell you how. Promise me that you won’t give up in life. No matter how hard life gets, you will choose to win and also stand in the dignity of truth,” he looked at them one after another as he spoke.

“*We promise,*” they chorused together.

“*And one more thing, you must never tell another soul about the casino, you must forget everything that happened,*” he looked them in the eyes as he spoke.

Kwesi answers for the others. “*It is a thing of the past, we promise to keep it to ourselves.*”

“*My mother must be worried about me, I should get going,*” Akua said, she was giddy with happiness. “*But what about our phones?*” she asked.

“*Oh, you must forget about that one. Your phones will not be returned to you.*” The young fellows didn’t seem to care much about the phones, they were only too glad to be free from all the chaos. Daddy Wumba then offered to drive them home.

“No, Sir, you have done enough, we’ll find our way home,” Kojo protested, the others nodded in unison. They were about to leave when Daddy Wumba asked Akua to wait a while longer, he went into the inner room and came with some dollar bills. He gave them to Akua.

“I hope this will be enough to take care of your mother’s hospital bills.” Akua was speechless. She opened her mouth to say something, and then shut it, she opened it again and tears came rushing down her face.

“Thank you, Sir. I can’t thank you enough.” Daddy Wumba walked them to the junction where they would hitch a ride to their homes, then bade them farewell and returned to his house. When he returned to the house, he found DJ Banku

still drowning himself in the wine he opened earlier.

“This is a really good wine,” he said.

“Take it easy, old man, there are no rooms for drunkards in this house.” Daddy Wumba shuffled his feet to the cupboard to get himself a bottle of water. And he drank, his Adam’s apple moved in rhythm with *the water*.

“What you did for those young people was amazing, sticking out your neck like that, exposing yourself to the Cartel. That was a heroic act,” DJ Banku said, he looked at his friend admiringly.

“I didn’t stick out my neck, I saved my neck,” Daddy Wumba answered with an honest smile. *“For the last twenty years, I have never felt such a relief as I felt today. I wasn’t able to help myself years ago but now I was able to help*

these young people. It gladdens my heart."

"Thank you, after all, you are the one who did the neck sticking." They laughed before DJ Banku's face became cold after a while.

"I will always be indebted to you my friend, for finding a place in your heart to forgive me."

"I was very selfish back then all I thought about was money, when I delivered you to Don Carlos, I knew for sure what he wanted from you, but I played along, because of the payment I would be getting. I basically sold you."

Daddy Wumba got his glass from the table, poured out some of his whisky, and said, *"You already did me a solid. You helped me escape remember,"* he pulled himself closer to the table and held DJ

Banku's both hands and continued, *"I forgave you that day you helped me out of the country. What happens in our youth, stays in our youth. Right now, you are my good friend."*

"And I say thank you for today," with tiny tears of joy in both their eyes, they embraced each other.

PART FOUR

**NOTHING STAYS
HIDDEN UNDER THE
SUN - NOW, WE KNOW**

CHAPTER 11

Mami was sitting on a cane chair, outside the house, her hand was on her chin and she appeared deep in thought. The next minute she saw an apparition of Akua or so she thought. She ran towards it until she realised it was Akua indeed. *"Where have you been young woman?"*

"Oh Mami, I am so sorry, I didn't tell you I would be spending the night out."

"But you would have called, I have been trying to call your phone since yesterday."

"Mami I lost my phone yesterday, that is why I was unable to call you. Oh, I am sorry, I didn't mean to worry you."

"Anyway, I hope you are doing fine?"

"Yes Mami," Akua responded, she tried to brush past Mami to go inside and freshen up.

"Where did you say you spend the night again?" Mami asked.

"At my friend's place, my friend, Kojo." She knew if Mami heard Kojo's name, she would no longer ask any questions. Mami was fond of Kojo. They have been friends since secondary school and Kojo always brings gifts for Mami whenever he visits.

"Oh Kojo, my boy, I haven't seen him for some time now, hope he is doing fine?"

"Yes Mami, he sent his greetings," Akua replied. They both entered the house together. Akua wanted to freshen before telling Mami about the good news but she could not wait.

"Mami, I have good news for you," she brought out the dollar bills Daddy Wumba had given her.

"Mami this is for your medication, we no longer have to worry about money for your surgery." Mami's eyes stayed wide open in shock. He had not seen that amount of money in ages.

"My dear, where did you get all this money?" Mami asked.

"From a good Samaritan my friends and I met, and after sharing my story with him, he decided to help with the surgery.

"Where is this person, so I can express my gratitude?" Mami was beside herself with joy. "Mami you will meet him soon, I have his contact, and I will have you call him, but for now, you should go get ready, so we can head to the hospital

right away." Mami nodded and they both went inside to get ready.

Meanwhile, Kwesi had just arrived at their house, this time he didn't come home empty-handed, he had stopped at a bakery and purchased some bread for his siblings. He immediately spotted his father sitting outside on an armchair, and reading a newspaper, "*Good morning, Sir,*" Kwesi greeted his father.

"Good morning, and welcome back home."

"Thank you, Sir," he handed the package he had to his younger brother, who hurriedly rushed to the kitchen to show their mother. Kwesi went inside, and as he was about to enter the room, Auntie Adjoa greeted him, he was very shocked because, for the first time in two years, Auntie Adjoa finally greeted him. He

smiled and responded and then walked into their room.

It was about 12:30 pm and Wale was still loitering around their gate, wondering how he would face his parents, he knew his father was furious with him, he noticed his father's car outside, and knew for certain that he was still in the house. He stood at the gate for some time, waiting for his father to leave the house before going inside, but after standing outside for hours, there was no sign of his father leaving the house, so he decided to go in anyway. *"Ehh, Wale! You are back," John ran towards him, "Where is the old man?"* Wale asked him

"Oh, you mean Dad, his car is still acting up, so he decided to take a taxi today."

"Really! So you mean Dad is not at home?"

"Sure, he isn't, but mom is in the kitchen, she sent me to go get some provisions. See you when I get back," with that, John hurried off. Wale then went to the kitchen and greeted his mom, who appeared to be very glad to see him.

"Wale! I had a strange dream last night, I tried calling you early this morning, but couldn't get through, I am glad you are finally back home" she said as she caressed him on the jaws.

"I am fine, Mom, the thing is I lost my phone last night, sorry if I got you worried.

"It's okay dear, I am just glad you are home, safe and sound, reserve all your apologies for your Father, he is still furious with you," she shook her head and went back to her cooking. Wale returned to his room and was about to take a bath

when an idea came to him, he immediately rushed outside with his tools.

Wale had studied mechanical engineering in college and was supposed to further his studies abroad when he decided to drop out, so he certainly had some knowledge of cars. He dropped his tools on the ground and began working on his father's car. It took him a while, but he managed to repair the damage in his father's car and was about to try it out when his father suddenly returned.

"*Welcome Sir,*" Wale greeted him. His father nodded and moved into the house, pretending not to have noticed what Wale was doing with the car. From the window of his room, he watched as Wale worked on the car. He smiled at his son.

"I think you should let them know, it's about time," Kwame's mother said. She was nursing him on his bed.

"You are right, Mom, it's about time I let them know, but first, let me regain my strength, I do not want any of them seeing me like this," Kwame replied softly.

"Okay dear, whatever you want," she kissed him on his forehead and left the room. She was about to go to her room when she heard a knock on the door. As she opened it, it was Kojo standing in front of her.

"Oh my dear, how are you?"

"I am fine Ma," replied Kojo, " I just wanted to find out how Kwame is faring now. Can I please see him?"

"Oh sorry my dear, his Uncle took him to see a specialist, and they will return tomorrow."

"Is that so? Okay, please get him to call me when he is better."

"Certainly, he will. Thank you, my dear, for coming," she bade him farewell and shut the door. The coldness on her face worried Kojo. He could not tell if Kwame's case was a minor thing or if it was critical.

As he walked back to his place, he kept thinking of all the times Kwame acted weird, he certainly had ideas in his head, but he had no intentions of drawing any conclusions yet, and was avoiding worrying thoughts that would take away the peaceful mindset he now enjoys. He recalled the amazing incident that just took place at his house, a few hours ago. Kojo had returned back home to find his parents waiting for him at his hostel gate, words couldn't explain the shock he had,

when he saw his parents, it was more like a miracle for him, for he was wondering with what courage he would face his parents who lived a long way, away from him. It wasn't going to be easy making time to go see them, especially when he wasn't sure if he would be received or not. When he saw them in front of his hostel, he could not hold himself, so he ran towards them and embraced them. Afterwards, he knelt to apologise to his father.

"It's okay my boy, get up. I am here because I have forgiven you," his father said, holding his hand, they embraced again. Kojo led them to his room, and along with the many foodstuffs his mother brought for him, they made peace

and planned for a way forward. Since they were coming from far away, they didn't stay that long, it was about 3:00 pm when they left Kojo's hostel.

Remembering this brought a huge smile to Kojo's face, he took a long walk, before he finally decided to take a taxi. While in the taxi, he thought of going to check up on Akua, and her mother, "*It's late already, I should probably go see them tomorrow,*" he thought to himself as he lay back in the backseat.

CHAPTER 12

Wale was still wrapped in bed, when his younger brother John, rushed into his room and handed him the phone "*It's your friend Kwame,*" John said.

"Kwame, how are you? How are you faring now man? Hope you are fine?" Wale just couldn't stop, he was happy hearing from Kwame, but all Kwame said was, "*Get the others, so you guys can come to the house, I am waiting.*" Before Wale could respond to that, the phone went off.

"Sorry Bhra, I have to charge it," John said as he hurried out. Wale immediately jumped off the bed, took his bath, and headed off to Kojo's place.

When he got there, Kojo was getting ready to leave the house.

"Ehh Bhra, I was just thinking about how to reach you, " Kojo said to his friend who just walked in." Kwame called me this morning, and he needed us to come check up on him," Wale replied,

"Wow, so he is back now?" Kojo asked.

"Back? What do you mean back? Anyways I think we should get a taxi and go get Kwesi so we can head off to Kwame's from there, as for Akua, her place is a little far off, I guess we will figure out how to get to her," Wale said as they hurried out. They boarded a taxi and proceeded as planned. After they had picked up Kwesi, they headed straight to Kwame's place. As they got to his house, the gate was opened, so they went straight to the door, and surprisingly for them, Kwame answered the door himself,

he seemed like the usual Kwame they know.

"*Welcome guys,*" Kwame said as he led them in.

"*Kwame you look okay now,*" Wale said.

"Yeah, I know right," he led the way to his room.

"*Where are we going?*" Kojo asked.

"*To my room.*" They were kind of surprised because Kwame had never taken them to his room before, they always hung out on the balcony whenever they visited, or sometimes just stayed in their beautiful yard outside. But they were heading to the room that day. They all stayed quiet and followed Kwame to his room. As they got to the door, Kwame hesitated and thought of taking his friends to the balcony instead, he was still

having second thoughts when his mother appeared by the door side opposite his room.

"It's time to let them know son," she said as she walked past them. Kwame held himself and opened the door, the first sight was unbelievable, it was nothing like a regular bedroom, for a moment they thought they were in a hospital, the room smelt of multiple types of medication, and glucose bags were hanging around the room, and an oxygen mask besides the bed, there were different types of hospital equipment in that room, the only difference from a hospital emergency ward was the king-size bed at the centre. They were all shocked, and in total confusion, they didn't know which question to ask first.

"Did you say this is your room? Like where you sleep every night?" Wale's hands were on his chest as he spoke.

"Yes! This is my reality, this has been my life since I was ten," Kwame replied. They went into the room as he showed them the different things he use.

"Most nights I can't sleep without this," he pointed to the oxygen mask as he said this.

"In fact, all the nights I spend in this room, I sleep with it on, because the nights I am healthy, I love spending it at Kojo's place," he smiled and continued. *"This here I use every now and then because I get weak often,"* he pointed to the glucose bags and then sat on his bed, stretched his hand on the table close to the bed, and picked up a pack of medical pieces of equipment and went on. "

My younger brother shares his blood with me whenever I have one of my episodes." He stopped, smiled, and continued, *"You see, he sits just here, very close to me, and will hurriedly use these stuff you see right here, to share his blood with me."* He smiled again.

"The boy wants to be a doctor now, I guess he has had enough straining already." He was trying to be funny, but as he turned, he realised his friends had tears running down their eyes, he stood up, went towards them, and said, "Guys, reserve this for the funeral. I was born with a condition that allows me to live only for a short while, the only reason I have lived this long is because of the money my dad left behind." He stopped again, went towards the window,

observed the cloudiness in the sky, and then turned to his friends.

"I am dying guys, the doctor said my time is quarter to midnight." Kojo could no longer contain his tears. He held Kwame by the shoulders.

"Tell me this is a big joke, you can't be sick Kwame, you are one of the strongest people I know." Kwame freed himself from him, smiled, and said.

"I am not sick Kojo, I am dying." There was silence in the room, a feeling of hopelessness, a breeze of pain, and fear so thick that a knife could slice through. "Why didn't you say anything all this while," Kojo asked.

"I didn't want anyone feeling sorry for me, above all, I wanted to live a normal life, in the best way I could. I didn't want my friends to feel sorry for me and try to

babysit me every now and then. I have had enough from my family already."

Kwesi held himself and then asked, "How much time have you got?" Wale and Kojo gave him a death stare but Kwame smiled.

"A day, a few days, a week, any of the above," Kwame answered slowly. There was no way they could hold back their tears, their grief was heavy.

"Guys, I am happy, I am okay with my fate. What I do not want is to spend my last days with medications or in a sorrowful mood. I want to throw a party here tomorrow, it's going to be lit," there was excitement in his voice.

"Anything for you bro, just tell us what you need," Wale said, putting his hand around Kwame's shoulders. "Great! Let's start making preparations. And one

more thing, can we please not say anything to Akua, you know women, and their drama."

"*That's cool with us bro,*" Kojo found his voice again.

Kwame then led his friends back to the yard outside, and his mother immediately brought some fresh fruit juice she had just made.

"*No one should leave yet, okay? I'm making something for you all,*" she told them as they thanked her for the juice. Kojo kept wondering how Kwame's mother managed to be so calm, he soon understood that Kwame was the apple that didn't fall far from the tree, he was exactly like his mother - calm in every situation. Kwame noticed there was still some tension in the air from the information he shared with his friends, so

he immediately switched to a different topic.

"Charlie, how did it go? I mean Don Nicholas's men, are they still after us?"

"No Bhra, Daddy Wumba and his friend took care of it, we are off the hook now," Kojo answered.

"Oh great. Honestly, I didn't think it was going to be that easy, so I guess we're off the hook now, we can have our party in peace."

"Bhra I have learnt my lessons, next time... in fact there will be no next time, because from now on, I am doing things by the books," Wale's voice was low and humble as he spoke. He looked at his friends who nodded to his words in unison.

"Seriously guys, I really felt down listening to your stories the other day, you

all poured out your hearts you know," Kwame looked at them one after the other as he spoke.

"You see, your reasons for wanting to be part of that business are extremely different from mine. The truth is, I've always known something fishy goes down in that Casino, but I didn't care, I just wanted some adventure."

"I am sorry guys, maybe if I had told you of my suspicions we wouldn't have been there in the first place, I guess I was just being selfish." Wale stopped him right there with a dismissive wave.

"Come on Bhra, it's all good, we all ignored a lot of thoughts," he spoke sharply, as he smiled at Kwame.

"We all learnt a lot from that experience, I guess everything happens for a reason," Kwesi added.

"*You are right Bhra, we have learnt a lot,*" Kojo affirmed. They hung around for a while, had their food, and tried to occupy their minds with other things.

"*Hey guys, I was thinking, we should go check up on Akua, and her mother,*" Kojo said.

"*Yeah, that will be good, we should go right away,*" Kwame agreed, he went into his room to change his outfit and when he came out, they were all ready to leave. "*Guys, where is Akua's house so I can order for Uber?*" Kwame asked as he held out his Android phone, Kojo gave him the location, and they were expecting a ride in ten minutes.

"Bhra, so you still have your phone with you, I thought we all gave it out the other night?" Kwesi asked Kwame.

"That be my iPhone wey they take." As he answered, they went to where his mother was sitting by the front yard, bade her farewell and by then, the Uber had arrived, so they all left for Akua's house. Luckily for them, they met Ama trying to lock the door on her way out, Kojo hurried out of the car towards her.

"Ama!"

She rushed towards him and embraced him, "*Oh Bhra Kojo, you don't come to check on us anymore,*" Ama was pouting as she spoke.

"I have been a little busy my dear. By the way, where is Akua?"

"She has been in the hospital since yesterday with Mami."

"Oh my! Which hospital is that?"

"Tabora general Hospital."

"I guess you are going there right now?" Ama nodded in affirmation.

"Okay then, let's just go there together, I came with Uber, my friends are still in the car," he led Ama to the car.

"Guys, Akua is in the hospital with her mom, Ama will take us there," as he spoke, he was about to enter the car with Ama when the Uber driver objected.

"I am sorry I can't carry more than four, in fact, the maximum is supposed to be three. We just managed to carry four sometimes," he said.

"Bhra, please, please! We are all not fat, we will be comfortable behind here, and moreso, the roads are not bad, just carry us, I will settle you, please!" Kojo pleaded with him. He appeared to give it some thought, and then Ama entered and they headed to the hospital.

Ama led the way and took them to where her mother was, but she wasn't there anymore, she asked one of the nurses whom she recognised, and she was directed to the new place. When they got there, they immediately saw Akua sitting on a bench in the corridor, Ama ran to her and asked "*Where is Mami?*" She was shaking in fear.

"Mami is undergoing surgery."

Kojo and the rest of her friends came closer to her, she was very happy when she saw Kwame, seeing him on his feet brought her relief.

"Kwame! I am glad to see you healthy, hope you are feeling better now?"

"Sure dear, I am doing okay. Sorry about your mother's health."

"*Thanks, bro,*" she properly greeted the rest of her friends, she then instructed her little sister Ama, to stay there in case there was an emergency, the surgery room was just next to them. She and her friends moved to the canteen. While at the canteen, Akua told Kojo she had been to his place earlier in the morning since his place was relatively close to the hospital.

"*Oh sorry, I had to leave early to go check up on Kwame.*"

"*Charlie you almost gave me a heart attack that day,*" Akua said to Kwame.

"*Sorry dear, it was just one of my episodes.*" Akua had wanted to ask more, but Wale immediately switched the topic.

"*We get party tomorrow.*"

"*Party! Whose party?*" Akua asked.

"I just want to celebrate life, I mean after the adventure we went through, one needs to celebrate," Kwame responded.

"Wow! So it's your party then, where will it be?" she asked.

"At our house." Akua was already getting excited.

"I just pray Mami's surgery goes successfully, so I can really celebrate with a peaceful mind," she had a distant look in her eyes as she spoke.

"You know if I had not brought her here yesterday, it would have been another story entirely. After the doctor ran some checks on her, he immediately requested surgery," at this moment Kojo slowly held her hand.

"Mami will be fine, okay?" he said with an air of certainty. Akua nodded her head, in response and said, "Oh! God

bless Daddy Wumba for me. I wasn't expecting him to support me with money for Mami's surgery, I didn't even know he was listening to my story," she shook her head, and smiled in contentment.

They all ordered food, and stayed at the canteen for some time, cracking jokes and remembering old times, they didn't even realise they had been there for more than an hour. This helped Akua relax, and for a while, her mother's situation seemed to have been put on the other side of her mind. They were still there until Ama came running towards them.

"Akua, the doctor said he wants to see you now!" She was running out of breath. Akua didn't even wait to ask further questions before rushing to the doctor's office, her heart was pounding

really fast, she had imagined all that could have happened. She soon got to the doctor's office panting and sweating. Her friends had also followed but at the doctor's instruction, they had to wait outside. "*The surgery was successful,*" the doctor said happily. Akua was just so happy, she was even confused about what to say next.

"I just need you, to ensure she gets all the drugs prescribed, and please, once she is awake, ensure she takes enough rest."

"I will do just that, thank you so much, doctor."

"*Can I see her now?*" she asked.

"Not yet, don't worry you will be notified when you can see her."

"Thank you, Sir."

Coming out from the doctor's office, she shared the news with her friends and her sister. They were all so relieved. They all went back to the canteen to wait for the next steps. While they were at the canteen, Ama received a call from their aunt, who had heard of their mother's situation and had decided to come immediately.

"Akua, Aunt Yaa is at the house right now."

"Okay, I think you should call her again, so I can give her our location," Ama called her and Akua tried directing her to the hospital, but Aunt Yaa was just not getting it, so she decided to hire a taxi to go bring her. At this point the boys who had already been at the hospital for some hours, had to take their leave, *"Akua, I*

will be expecting you tomorrow at my party."

Kwame said

"I will do my best to be there," she spoke in a rather soft and slow tone as if she wasn't so sure she would make it. She saw her friends off to the hospital gate, and when they were gone, she immediately hired a taxi to their house.

CHAPTER 13

Kojo went back to his hostel along with Kwesi, and Wale had to rush home before it was late since he was planning on staying in his father's good book. Kwame also returned home.

As soon as he got home, he went straight to his room, and as he opened the door, he felt irritated by the sight of the medical equipment, he immediately started taking them out, one by one into the basement, while he was at it, his mother suddenly showed up.

"Kwame what are you doing?" she ran towards him, she was in total disagreement with his decision to move the equipment to the basement.

"What if you have one of your episodes at night? What will happen then?" she cried out.

"Then it's going to be a peaceful end, Mom, I do not wish to die with all of this equipment around. Let me just enjoy the few nights I have left, in a normal atmosphere. I have never really enjoyed my room, tonight I want to enjoy my room, without feeling like I am in some hospital," he spoke very firmly, it was clear his mind was made up, the poor woman couldn't say anything. She stood there for a while and decided to help her son move the equipment to the basement.

When they were done, he kissed her and went to sleep. Throughout the night, she kept coming to check on him and was pleased to find him sleeping peacefully each time.

Early the next morning Kwame was already awake and he was sitting in the kitchen, working out a list of the items he

would be needing for the party, luckily for him, it was a Saturday, and his younger brother was home, and available to help him with the preparations.

"How many friends will you be having over?" his mother asked when she came into the room.

"Good morning Mom," Yaw, his younger brother greeted her. He was making a bowl of cereal for himself.

"Good morning my dear," she answered him and nudged Kwame for a reply.

"Oh, Mom, just my regular friends, the ones you already know, and I equally told Yaw he could invite some of his close friends." He was already done with his list and was preparing to leave for the market. His mother asked Yaw to accompany him to the market, and even

though Kwame rolled his eyes, he could understand his mother's concern. That same morning, Kwesi and Kojo had gone to the phone shop to replace their phones and retrieve their contact. Kojo also got a new phone for Akua. He decided to take it to her at the hospital before going home, but when he got to the hospital, Ama informed him that Akua had gone home to freshen up, he left the phone with Ama and went home. Kwesi had gone back to his parents' house from the phone shop, for he needed to get some clean clothes. As soon as Kojo returned home, he put a call across to Kwame and offered to go help him out, but Kwame rejected the offer and asked him to come at 3 pm for the party. Kojo was really relieved because he had been feeling exhausted and really needed the rest. He took a nap,

and only woke up when his phone rang. He soon realised it was Akua.

"Kojo thank you so much for my phone, I got another number, I was finding it difficult to retain the old one," she seemed very excited about her new phone and went on and on with the explanation. As they spoke, she confirmed her availability for the party, and they looked forward to the fun.

It was 2 pm that afternoon and Kwame was done with his set-up, the whole place looked radiant, for a moment his mother thought they were having the whole town for the party, and he had ordered a lot of food. His mother also made some snacks and put them in packs. It was a full-time celebration, and some of Yaw's friends had already started showing up, Kwame hurriedly took his bath and

looked forward to his friends' arrival. It wasn't for long, just a few minutes past 3 pm, Wale showed up, he announced his arrival in his usual loud voice, Wale and Kwame settled down in the yard, Kwame had arranged and decorated it, whilst Kwame's younger brother Yaw was having his friends inside. Kojo soon arrived, almost at the same with Kwesi, they were really happy to see Kwame. At this point, the party started in full force. There was just so much to eat and drink. Kwame's quiet side was relegated to the background. He wanted to be loud and happy throughout the party and he did just that.

It was 6 pm when Akua finally arrived. "Oh guys, I am sorry I am late, aunty Yaa had me running errands that took most of my time." They were all

happy she turned up, and Kwame went to her and said, "Thanks for being here dear, I know it's a tide moment for you, but you still made time to be here. I am grateful," he hugged her.

"Oh! come off it, it's nothing we are like family remember?" She smiled as she settled down to enjoy the party. There was an unending excitement, everywhere was lit, and there seemed to be more people around than expected, most were Yaw's friends, and Kwame had some other people who showed up.

"*Bhra* you hold smoke?" Kwame whispered in Wale's ears.

"*Smoke? Kwame!*" exclaimed Wale, "*No Bhra, I couldn't even think of bringing that stuff here, after learning about your health,*" he spoke frankly to him.

"You are right Bhra, I don't need that now, forget I even asked, I think we should just be like Kwesi and Akua," he smiled at his friend.

"Seriously Bhra, I am really considering quitting..." Before Wale could complete his statement, Kojo walked in on them.

"Quitting? What are you quitting," he seemed really curious.

"Smoking Bhra, I think we should all quit," Wale answered, looking into his eyes.

"You have a point there."

"You guys can think it through, but for now, let's party," they smiled at him and went back to the party.

It was a beautiful day, and Kwame appeared very happy, his mother had never seen him that happy before.

"*Oh my boy, my beautiful boy,*" she had tears coming down her eyes as she peeped through the window. It was 10 pm already, and the guests had started leaving. Soon, only Kwame's friends were left. They stayed back and helped with the cleaning. When they were done, they fell asleep in the living room, they had been talking into the night. By midnight, his mom came to the living room to wake them to use the guest room and Kwame's room but seeing them all sleeping peacefully together, she hesitated and let them be.

CHAPTER 14

It was 6:30 am when Akua opened her eyes. She stretched her body on the couch and realised it was dawn. She stood up slowly and tapped Wale, he woke up in one touch. The two of them sat down and watched the other three sleep for a while, laughing at their drooling and outstretched legs. Akua even took a picture of them. She then decided to wake them up one after the other. She first tapped Kojo and called out to Kwame. Kwesi woke up first, yawned, and made to go back to sleep.

“It’s dawn guys, wake up.”

Kojo and Kwesi sluggishly woke up, stretching their legs and yawning. Kwame was still lying down sleeping peacefully in the same position. Akua shook him again and again. She realised his body was cold.

Her heartbeat accelerated as she called his name over and over again. Kwame was long dead, the boys stood still in confusion, they didn't know what to do. Akua still hoped to wake him up.

"Kwame! Wake up!" At this point, she knew exactly what had happened. The scream from Akua brought Kwame's mother, and younger brother to the sitting room.

"What is going on here?" Yaw asked sharply. In tears, Akua pointed to Kwame who was lying lifeless on the couch, she could not even speak, she was shaking.

Kwame's mother went to him, examined him for a while, and sprawled on the ground.

"So this day has finally come," she screamed, and wailed but there were no tears in her eyes.

Yaw ran out in anger and

pain, he was shouting. Kojo went after him, trying to calm him down.

"You must put yourself together, remember you are all your mom has now," he was also crying as he spoke. Wale and Kwesi stayed back on the couch and cried like mature men would. Kwame's mother being the strong woman she was, took hold of herself, laid her son properly on the couch, sat next to him, and made a call for an ambulance. She kept muttering to herself as she sat next to him, it was obvious she was in so much pain, but no tears ran through her eyes. The ambulance soon arrived, and one of the nurses properly examined him, and later covered him, placed him on a stretcher, and he was carried into the ambulance.

The sight of Kwame in that state was the confirmation that he was really dead. His mother could no longer hold herself. Some neighbours rushed into the compound to find out what the problem was.

"My boy has finally gone," she kept moving about the compound as if she were looking for something, some of the women already present there held her as she started weeping seriously. Before the ambulance would take Kwame away, they needed to sign some papers, but in her condition, Yaw knew his mother could not do it, so he put across a call to his Uncle who lived nearby. When the Uncle came, he and Kojo went along to the morgue in the ambulance. There was so much wailing and weeping in that house that day, other extended family members soon

started coming, and preparations were made for his burial. Since he was a young man, he wasn't to be kept in the mortuary for long, so arrangements were made to bury him, in three days.

His friends (Kojo, Wale, Kwesi, and Akua) met at Kojo's place to plan for the funeral. *"I thought he was doing fine, he was healthy, what must have happened for him to just die like that?"* Akua asked, looking at her friends. Her eyes were still red from all the tears.

"He didn't die suddenly. Akua he was sick," Kwesi tried to console her but even he could not help himself.

"Let's be strong okay?" Kojo said to them, they held hands as they tried to draw strength from one another. They all

The Gold Business

agreed on what they would be wearing, and the contributions for the funeral.

CHAPTER 15

"In life, there is time for everything, -there is a time to laugh - there is a time to cry. You see my dear brethren, death is a necessary end, God giveth, and he taketh, who are we to question him?" The Pastor paused, wiped the sweat off his brow, and continued.

"We are gathered here today to bid farewell to our beloved son, brother, and friend. We are in no doubt, for we know certainly he is resting peacefully with the father above." He lifted his two hands and prayed.

"Almighty Father, we thank you for the opportunity of life you had given our son, Kwame Joseph, we pray Almighty Father that you accept his humble soul, and let him find rest..." before he could conclude, the crowd immediately shouted

"Amen!" He blessed his grave and instructed for him to be laid to rest. Seeing the coffin being lowered into the grave broke Kwame's mother's heart even more. It was true that her son was really gone. She looked up to the heavens with a sigh and looked by her right side to find her son, Yaw watching her. He was dressed in an all-black outfit with black shades, she held him as they were asked to fill in the first sand into the grave. His friends were the last to fill in the sands, they stood there till they were done filling the grave. Even after everyone else had left, they were still there. They made a ring round his grave and bid him farewell in their own way. Akua took out a piece of paper from her bag and read it out loud,

"You were gentle,

You were calm,

The Gold Business

*Soft-spoken, and easy-going.
Spoke only when necessary,
And listened even when not
necessary.*

*You were loved, and you
loved.*

*Indeed it was a privilege,
every beautiful moment,
spent with you.*

*As you sleep, be reassured,
Forever in our hearts.*

Gentle Kwame."

With tears in her eyes, she looked at her friends and they looked back at her. Kojo stretched out his hands, and reached out to her, with tears in their eyes, they managed to smile at each other and walked away.

The Gold Business

THE END