

Kayode Olla

Author of *If I was a Dragongod*

RECONQ^UERED

SOMEWHERE, AID IS HADES



“I have found a crack. Check your email in a minute.”

“It’s going to be a long year!”

“Let’s get rid of the tears, Mia.”

“What can man not do?”

“Brace up, Mia. You’ve survived living with a lion. Mere dogs can only bark.”



THE AUTHOR

Kayode Olla is an ambassador of Christ. A husband to a beauty. A lecturer when he wakes. A novelist when he dreams.

Get More of His Free Thriller Novels at: www.ktolla.com

THE BOOK

Colonised for a hundred years before becoming independent in 1920, Kimberland finds herself squashed under an epic conquest in 2020.

And everything becomes a mad race for the Rock Castle itself (Kimberland's Presidential House) and for the enslaved nation at large.

The conquered yet charismatic President Jacobs has got a whole lot to grapple with already.

And then, an unknown love child from a long forgotten relationship suddenly shows up, and shook things up.

Reconquered is a thrilling story about the silent side of ambition. Yet its telling is particularly light and quite so fun to read.

Kayode Olla

RECONQUERED



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A Garlaxi's eBook

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Published in Nigeria by



Garlaxi's Media

An Arm of Garlaxi's Company

Behind Groundnut Oil Factory,

Off Owode-Adejuwon Road, Agodo, Ede, NG

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Prologue

PRESIDENT Jimi Jacobs crumbled down to his knees. Right before the frozen eyes of the entire nation.

He spread out a pair of tightly clenched fists before him, flung his head backwards and exhaled a frustrated gasp of breath.

Just about then, he brought his entire upper frame bowing forwards. And he shook terribly with a long, breathless cry.

He cried. It was like the deafening shriek of a spanked little girl.

The handsome middle aged man raised his gaze again into the hazy skies above; a scalding stream coursing down his reddened eyes.

Jimi pulled out a long, loud groan from his aching throat. And never in history had a President of Kimberland cried that way, in public glare.

It was the 1st of January, 2020.

A presidential airbus – a giant, sleek-bodied transport helicopter, and with a twenty-two-man carriage – swooped towards the huge, vast crematorium.

At the outskirts of Kimberland's Mountana City.

A host of thousands of citizens lifted their solemn gazes as the President's aircraft hovered in the far distance.

The standing multitude was clad in black clothes, with each person wearing a sanitary mask over their nose in the lingering overnight haze.

The hilly city of Mountana in the far distance was itself dense with several huge billows of fume. And they were the telltale of the tragedy that hit the entire city two days earlier.

Precisely the 30th of December, 2019. Probably in the early hours before dawn.

Mountana City in the Northern Province had always stood out a tourist pride of Kimberland. The stunningly beautiful city boasted of almost everything Nature.

Talk of four beautiful hills and mountains. Three waterfalls. A small plateau. And a few valleys with winding springs.

Mountana was the greedy kid of Kimberland's nature endowed cities and districts.

And as such, the ambitious little Eden was home to flourishing travel hotels and resort parks. And these had always fed the Kimberian economy through a working tax policy.

But now, the lively city sadly laid a silent heap of eight hundred thousand cold bodies.

By a cause no one could adequately explain. And for a cause no one could adequately tell.

The presidential helicopter soon landed at a distance.

A swarm of pressmen advanced with a surge towards the direction, with camera shutters clipping on the President's arrival.

A set of government aides began trooping out of the helicopter, their boots thumping a heavy thud into the ground as they jumped down.

President J. J. stepped down from the helicopter; his eyes sunken and fatigued.

A podium had been erected in front of the crematorium, where he'd give a speech mourning the national tragedy.

He strode towards the podium, with his aides trotting behind and around him.

A personal aide rushed up to him and handed him a sanitary mask, while curtsying with a reverent bow.

Jimi halted and glanced at the sanitary mask in his hand a second. He shook his head and thrust the mask back into the giver's hand.

The aide was taken aback. Why would the President not want to use the sanitary mask he just handed him?

The presidential aide started at the middle aged man, fearing he was the one at fault. 'Your Excellency, sir...!'

Jimi raised a hand to still him and signal he was just fine without the mask. The aide only quivered nervously, his fingers fumbling with the piece.

Cameras shutters severally clipped the moment the President refused the safety mask, as the pressmen advanced in a gallop.

The President raised his weary gaze at the advancing pressmen.

He turned his head and took a long look. There at a distance were the coffins of few bodies deliberately brought out of the crematorium to signify the funeral.

He could see vast, endless photos of the victims. Faces of people that were some seventy-two hours ago living residents of the lively city of Mountana.

And a gasp of whimper escaped the president's quivery lips.

The middle aged man picked himself up in a jiffy and trudged towards the funeral, where the poor souls laid.

The advancing pressmen turned towards the direction the president trotted and hurried along.

Jimi got to the funeral ground and there they were—the symbol of a whole city of eight hundred thousand souls lying as dead as a cold lump of stone.

He just stood still.

To the pressmen and the gathered nation, the sight of the frozen first citizen was best described as the unconscious freeze after a bullet hit at the heart.

Just before the inevitable collapse that always follows.

Time stopped to count that instant and everybody stood absolutely rooted to the ground.

President Jimi Jacobs crumbled down to his knees. Right before the frozen eyes of the entire nation.

He cried. It was like the deafening shriek of a spanked little girl.

The entire crowd was moved. Some began yanking off their sanitary masks and throwing them to the ground in the height of emotion.

And pressmen captured every detail of the momentous drama and televised it live.

All that Kimberians expected from their president was for him to mount the podium and give a formal speech.

But President J. J.'s humanity had surpassed norms and expected standards a thousand times.

Viewers at home shed a tear while they watched the live telecast.

Newspapers sold all prints through the week within the first two hours of daylight.

And news blogs recorded a high traffic flood, some having their webservers crashed on the first day.

It was the top story on newspapers and on broadcasts in Kimberland throughout that week.

When, moreover, the international community caught up with the news, debates on whether Mr Jacobs deserved to be nominated for the year's Nobel Peace Prize filled the Internet.

Soon, almost everyone clamoured that Jimi Jacobs should vie for the presidential seat again, at the end of his first term in 2021. Volunteers

also set up campaigns and programs for him for a rerun.

The gorgeous middle aged President J. J. joined the league of Kimberland's heroes in the heart of citizens that day.

But then, not in the heart of losers who had got nothing more to lose.

Those that would unearth even hades beneath the world.

Chapter 1

MIA Krae sprang up from bed with a start.

If the twenty-five-year-old had slept through the night, anyone would have thought she just had a nightmare.

But her eyes had been awake all night.

She'd pointlessly buried herself in her laptop all through the night; furiously thumping at the keys with cramped and aching fingers.

Mia had busied herself with working on three frivolous news articles only to keep herself from shedding more tears.

She'd typed for hours before going to bed some one hour thirty minutes ago.

But Mia hadn't got a moment of sleep in bed.

She slid her feet into a pair of bathroom slippers and got up on her feet. She groped for the wall in the dim morning light and reached for the main light in her two-bedroom apartment.

She turned on the lights and just stood there for some moments, hands clasped over her waist. She looked at the wall clock.

It was about twenty-five minutes to six in the morning.

A new poster that'd been elaborately framed and decorated hanged on the wall just below the clock. It bore the following impressive words.

HERE IS A MAN WITH A HEART OF
KIMBERLAND BENEATH HIS CHEST

HERE IS THE ONE PATRIOT WITH COURAGE
AND COMPASSION

VOTE JIMI JACOBS AS THE PRESIDENT OF
KIMBERLAND

FOR THE 2017 GENERAL ELECTIONS

VOTE GREAT SERVICE, GREAT INTEGRITY &
SUPER GREAT ACCOUNTABILITY!

Gracing the centre page of the poster was a large picture of Jimi Jacobs.

Looking charmingly decorous, he solemnly placed a hand over a large heart; with his heart being the map of Kimberland.

Mia glanced briefly at the framed poster of the new President of Kimberland who came into office only three months ago.

It was October 2, 2017 today. Mia remembered her worries again, with the reminder bells the rolling year rang in her head.

The twenty-five-year-old journalist was dressed in a cream night gown with floral patterns of violet, mint green and sunset yellow.

Mia always wore her hair in a mass of natural curls with a lovely dark gloss. Her supple chocolate skin gleamed in the light with a coppery sheen.

And she had a slim figure with perfect curves.

Mia let out a frustrated sigh, a stream of tear coursing down her left cheek.

She muttered. 'Let's get rid of the tears, Mia.'

The young gorgeous girl rolled out a tissue paper from her desk and dabbed the tears.

She stretched her limbs back and forth to flex them. And after just a couple minutes, she began jogging on a spot.

Today was a Monday, but she didn't care she got up already late for work. She was really going to darn the consequences and live one moment at a time.

At least, for today.

Within a few minutes, the lovely girl of twenty-five was drenched with sweat.

And along the sweat flowed the tears.



The sun that dawned on Gardon City at the same time was like light showers of soothing rain on a cool day.

The gentle sunshine was the kind that instantly begot enough motivation and optimism for that initial weekday of work in Kimberland's capital city.

But then, as the sun dawned on the day, it only dusked on the dreams of the first citizen of the small tourist nation of Southern Africa.

The forty-six-year-old Jimi Jacobs sat in a large living room in the Rock Castle, Kimberland's presidential palace. Sitting resplendent in the capital city of Gardon.

The dark skinned Mr Jacobs had a handsome oval face, an average height and a sturdy frame. His low cropped hair glistened in the light with scanty specks of silvery grey strands.

He had a regular chin and wore a dark, shiny beard and moustache in a neat square shaped cut.

And his shoulders formed a broad square that reinforced his charming, athletic build.

Jimi raised his gaze from within the pile of papers he'd busied himself with through the night. He glanced at the wall clock right ahead of him.

It was about twenty minutes to six in the morning.

Jimi had set up a financial and economic development committee since about three months ago when he resumed the presidential position.

The committee had been working but it seemed it'd just been difficult to make reasonable progress on what he wanted.

At the end, the committee came up with a report anyway. But the report here wasn't inspiring. Not at all was it.

Discovered and conquered by the British Empire in 1820, the Southern African Kimberland had emerged an independent nation after a hundred years.

The former British subject tottered into a free, independent walk as a sovereign state in 1920.

And now in the year 2017, almost a hundred years after independence, Kimberland's economy already derived essentially from tourism and foreign investments.

President Jacobs reclined in his seat and flexed his neck a little.

The economist had taken it upon him to successfully sail the ship of Kimberian economy to stability and then unprecedented success.

But the committee he'd set up on the country's economy had only come up with a heartbreaking report.

They'd analysed the country's internal revenue, foreign investment as well as past fiscal plans and policies.

And it was crystal clear the economy had experienced sore wounds from past admirations.

And it appeared it might take a lot of time to heal up.

The report spelt out the patience of a farmer in every little detail. But the president was a jet age man.

Jimi picked up his phone on the side stool and dialled a number.

He waited for a few seconds while a deep husky voice of a man answered at the other end.

Jimi didn't bother with pleasantries.

He muttered. 'We need to talk.'



Mia dabbed her face dry with a towel.

She'd just halted her jogging and her body felt weary. It was the one hundred and fifty-sixth jog and she was fagged out already.

It wasn't from a physical stress Mia was fatigued. No; it was rather from an emotional one.

Mia sat down on the tiled floor and her mother's words popped up in her head.

'What is the essence of your so-called career advancements without a man?'

Mia used to be the envy of her classmates all through high school. She was good at almost everything. From her studies to public speaking, and to athletics in fact.

Everyone wanted to be like her. But Mia's goal through girlhood was to be the perfect picture in her mother's heart.

Mrs Krae was the perfectionist. She was the only one that found a flaw in her daughter's life.

Every race Mia had started in life had being about the perfect thing her mother could flaunt.

But Mia soon forgot about that when she started doing so well in the life after college.

After the smart younger woman graduated from the University at twenty-one, she soon got an enviable job at one of the leading news media in the country.

VCN.

Mia's workplace had its operational base in Kakakhi, Western Province. And she soon got herself a comfortable flat on a rent in the vast, booming city.

Her outstanding performance in her work soon began to earn her regular promotions.

She covered big stories for VCN's TV channel and got exclusives for political and governmental personages.

All these had earned Mia awards in the nation's news media and a growing nationwide recognition.

Mia wanted to own her happiness. And that she'd been achieving right from the time she graduated from the University.

She wanted to lead her own life.

But then, Mrs Krae wouldn't let go of her daughter that soon. Now that the younger woman was about twenty-five, Mrs Krae's expectations and worries had only just resumed.

Mia's mother came visiting her as frequent as rainfall in a season of flood. And Mrs Krae's rampant visitations only dampened the younger woman's fighting spirit.

'The true test of a woman's intelligence is being able to capture a good man's heart but what have you done? You haven't even found any man to call yours!

'Don't you want me to see my grandkids, Mia? Won't you give me grandkids, Mia?

'Look, you've only failed as a girl and as my daughter if you can't get yourself a responsible man at this age! You've totally failed regardless of those awards!

‘And those plaques and recognitions, uh? They haven’t fetched you a home, have they?’

Now seated on the floor exhausted from her joggings, Mia dabbed her sweat and tears with a towel. As her mother’s words of days ago sliced through her heavy chest.

When Mrs Krae stepped on the accelerator of her daughter’s life, Mia would usually charge up and go right on to get her mother’s wish done.

But this time, the accelerator wasn’t going to stir up the pretty young chap the way her mother expected.

Mia heaved a sigh where she sat on the floor.

She muttered in a sad, weak voice. ‘To my mother, I’m just a trophy. My whole life and existence is just a trophy for her to flaunt to the world!’

She raised her head, glanced at the wall clock and sprang up. She got her toiletries, and then rushed into the bathroom and turned on the shower.

She just remembered now that she could wash all her tears away.

Chapter 2

IT was already seven o' clock in the morning.

A set of two black salon cars screeched on a sudden halt. Right in front of the magnificent Presidential Office at the Rock Castle.

Precisely at the heart of the capital Gardon City.

The drivers hurried down and turned around the parked cars to let out their owners.

Two suited men stepped down from the sleek steel horses in a moment. Led by an aide, the two men walked up in quick sprints towards the most powerful building in Kimberland.

The duo was made up of a Professor Ojo in his mid-thirties and his predecessor, a Dr Oye in his late fifties.

The two brilliant chaps were the men behind the management wheels of the Kimberian economy.

They were renowned experts in the field of economics and money matters, with outstanding national and global contributions.

President Jimi Jacobs had appointed the younger Professor Ojo to take over from Dr Oye as the new Minister of Finance and Economy in his new administration.

He'd also chosen Ojo to lead the financial committee he'd set up when he resumed office.

The two men were led into the big, elegantly furnished office of the President.

‘Welcome and have your seat, Gentlemen.’ President Jimi Jacobs’ voice boomed with a deep tone where he sat behind the large office desk.

He motioned towards the comfy sofa set across the office room. The two men sat while Jimi crossed over to the seats with a set of stacked papers in his hand.

He spoke as soon as he took his seat. His words were fast paced and the tone decorous. ‘I’ve gone through the report and, I must say, you’ve done only half well.’

Jimi sat up at once as his eyes ran across the two seated men for a moment.

‘Well, I analysed the internal revenue and foreign investments generated per annum.

‘But still, gentlemen, you didn’t put the objective of the committee in mind with what I read here.’ He tapped on a set of typed papers in his hands.

‘I set up the financial and economic committee to show me how our yearly revenues can take care of the national projects my administration wishes to carry out.

‘But your committee only came up with lengthy pages of money flow and shortages, without relating them to the project needs on ground.

‘Now, let’s take it that there’s not so much money generated each year to take care of the projects; then, how do we make things possible, huh?’

The younger man was the one to speak. Professor Ojo.

‘My President, sir, we presented how we can improve the economy. We have a table and a chart flow on page 17.

‘The table details three aspects of the economy market where to expect a little rising difference. And the chart shows the expected growth curve in the next four years.’

Jimi reclined in his seat and took a deep breath. 'That's okay,' he breathed.

He turned to the older of the two listening men. 'Dr Oye, can I hear your response to the things I said.'

Oye sat up and cleared his throat. He was about to take over the wheel of the conversation and purposefully stir it his own way.

No, not the wheel of a mere conservation. But that of the entire country.

Dr Oye was a short man with a bold round face.

He had a full moustache and a short, greying goatee. He also had his head cleanly shaven and wore a pair of dark tinted glasses over his sunken eyes.

The fifty-six-year-old man spoke up.

And the candor in his deep, husky voice sounded in the ears like that of a glorious crown prince.



The press release made by the Mayor of Kakakhi City, Western Province of Kimberland, had set up a boiling thrill in the heart of a young man.

Teo, the handsome twenty-seven-year-old architect, had found a giant screen for his act and he wasn't going to let this pass him by.

The ambitious professional sat on a tall stool in a small room space, staring at a 3D architectural plan he'd projected on a wall screen.

He'd partition the room space out of the large studio space he leased for his budding architecture company in the heart of Kakakhi City.

The small room space was where Teo brought the structural ideas in his head into life—in drawings and 3D pictures.

Teo had a fair complexion and soft, supple skin that gave off a radiant gloss in daylight.

He had a handsomely bold face, a straight nose and a pair of pink lips. He also had a neat haircut and a clean shaven chin.

On a regular day, Teo was always dressed in a fitted T-shirt on a pair of jean trousers and sneakers.

Teo's entire lifestyle was sort of a triangle for him.

With the right side of the base angles pointed at a charming relationship with Foye. A warm beat in his heart since about a year ago.

The left base angle pointed at a serious relationship with his career, his one drive through active life.

The apex of Teo's triangular lifestyle pointed towards a devoted relationship with God.

The One Teo had learned to fully trust since when he wrote his final paper in the University.

That day was an unforgettable one for Teo, when the youngster knew it'd take only God to save him out of a serious scandal.

And he became devoted as a Christian ever since God rescued him.

It was an unforgettable experience the young architect would recall in weeks, when he'd arrive at a similar crossroads.

Teo guessed a new era was forthcoming for his career with the announcement of massive project of the Kakakhi Artificial Nature's Park.

Teo had only designed plans for private companies as well as for residential projects.

But then, he'd always dreamed of putting Kakakhi in the league of those Kimberian districts and cities that gloried in natural features.

Kimberland earned about 65% of its internal revenue from tourism.

The Southern African country boasted of clusters of natural wonders that wouldn't be found in the same large numbers in other parts of Africa.

The cities and districts that abounded in tourist attractions had always been considered as the backbone of Kimberland's economy.

But then, Kakakhi was a valley city with no natural attraction.

The absence was luckily made up for by the city's vastness.

Its bigness and vastness occasioned the establishment of a University campus in Kakakhi as well as various companies and trade centres.

And Teo had always imagined him making his district a tourist attraction with his architectural skill and creativity.

And this life dream had kept Teo's eyes awake all night.

Teo stared at the slideshow projection of avant-garde 3D architectural plans around the world.

He glanced at the phone tablet in his left hand. Its screen bore the online press release of the office of the Mayor of Kakakhi.

The press release stated the intention of the Mayor's administrative office to build a park with artificially created nature-like scenery.

The Mayor called on innovative architects to submit design proposals towards the construction of the Artificial Nature's Park.

Teo placed his phone tablet on the drawing table in front of him, got up on his feet and folded his arms across his chest.

He muttered. 'Man has made cities float on water; built machines to act like man; and flew with the birds and with the planets...'

He breathed. 'What can man not do?'



Dr Oye had his response ready for the president.

'My President, sir,' he began, 'I understand the yearly revenue wouldn't be able to take care of your projects at a go.' He paused for a second, to let the words sink.

‘But then sir,’ he went on, ‘I guess using the basic scale of preference concept is just something we have to resort to.’

He paused again for emphasis, and raised a keen eye into those of his all-righteous President. And then, he went on in a bit.

‘Your administration can take the projects one at a time, with the most important and necessary first.

‘We can first of all invest in yieldable areas of the market economy, since that’s the most crucial thing for the nation now.

‘And then, we embark on the most crucial of the project list annually, from the resources of the past and present.

‘Of course, that’s while we wait for your administration’s investments to yield and catch up with the present.’

He waited a moment and watched the people’s man sunken in thought.

And then, he finished his words in a hesitant, stammering voice. ‘Although it’s more like waiting patiently for a heavy rain on crops in desert lands... really! But we just can give it a try all the same.’

Jimi heaved a deep sigh.

He turned to the younger of the two men, the Professor. ‘Hmm... experience, people say, is the mother of knowledge.’

‘Ojo, I believe you still have a lot to learn from Dr Oye. You really do have a lot to learn.’

The president’s response was clear applause for the outgoing Minister of Finance and Economy. And Dr Oye very well knew that himself.

When it was first announced that the fifty-six-year-old Oye would be handing over to a man far younger and more learned than him, the older man was disappointed and sad.

But within a few months of working with the young, incoming minister, Dr Oye had had come to realise the young Professor was simple.

And that he hadn't learnt the ropes of the other world.

That had assured him and he didn't feel threatened by the younger man anymore.

With the president's slight dish on Professor Ojo and his recent bias for Dr Oye, the latter was beginning to reestablish his own place even in the new administration.

Jimi turned to Dr Oye; it was time to question his proposition.

'Well, back to your point, Dr Oye,' he began. 'Kimberians can't be patient with a president they put so much hope on for a large scale development.

'And I'm really sure doing one development project per year is not where you are driving at. I know that already.

'Why, we can't do one thing per time while waiting for investments to grow and yield returns. Until when will that be, uh?

‘That’s like telling a farmer to eat one meal per day until his crops yield, isn’t it? Tell me; how is that possible?’

It was the young Professor who seemed to catch the president’s fervour. And his reply was pretty instant.

Ojo interposed. ‘My President, sir, I completely agree with Dr Oye. I didn’t think of it from that perspective before.’

‘We can do the project one after another using the fund we have on ground.’

Dr Oye gave a little smirk while Jimi burst into a long, hysterical laughter.

‘Of course, Ojo!’ Jimi said, stifling his laughter with a hankie. ‘You put down your agreement as if it were a debate. This isn’t a debate, Mr Professor.’

‘More so, I’ve agreed already. It’s not like your disagreement will add or subtract from the issue.’

Ojo scratched a corner of his head and sat back.

He'd realised he was doing rather too much to want to impress the president. And his effort had only been falling on the awkward side from the very beginning.

Jimi's next words flowed with a matter-of-fact tone of voice.

'Please, stop drawing us back,' he said. 'We've put behind agreement or whatever.'

'What's pressing now is how we can take three square-meals a day while waiting for our crops to grow?'

Dr Oye's lips turned up in a little smile. 'Give us just three days more, my President. I'll desperately search out something for our desert crops.'

Jimi chuckled. 'Oh, another table and chart on Page 17, right?!'

Oye smiled. 'You can expect something really practical from me.'

The president nodded with acknowledgement.
'Mm, that's right.'

Professor Ojo couldn't bear the dish on him as well as the clever sideline. He slightly cleared his throat to register his presence for one last time.

Oye glanced at the young man and chuckled.

Professor Ojo gave up trying to beat Oye altogether.

Chapter 3

WHISPERS of birds, trees and the flowing stream were the music in Teo's ears that afternoon.

But then, it wasn't just nature that whispered melody to the ears of the young architect. The melody was the harmony of nature's humming and Teo's staff member's murmurs.

Teo had brought his four-man staff to the Yemija River in Yemija, a neighboring district to Kakakhi.

They'd been there that afternoon on a picnic. At least, in Teo's definition of one.

When Teo read the announcement made by the Mayor of Kakakhi the previous day, the young ambitious architect made plans to enter for the design bid and contest.

Teo decided to go to a place with abundant natural scenery and draw inspiration from the view. He declared a work free day for his staff and replaced it with a picnic.

His staff members were excited when he announced a picnic the previous day. What they didn't know was that the picnic wasn't going to be the exciting thing they'd imagined.

It'd been four hours Teo and his team had been at Yemija River. For what wasn't looking like a picnic at all.

Teo spent about an hour staring at the verdant greens that formed the backdrop of the scenic riverine environment.

He spent about another hour examining the pebbles, stones and shells at the riverside.

In the third hour and the fourth hour, Teo went over into the river and sat on a mound of rock that shot a little above the water level.

His eyes fixed beyond the clear surface, the young man gazed curiously into the riverbed. Stirring the river every once in a while, with the long stick in his hand.

Teo wasn't the only one busying himself with the Yemija River. The architect had got his staff members busy with replicating the natural scenario in drawings.

When the boys offered to take pictures, Teo insisted nature was better represented naturally.

And now, the four youngsters had reached the peak of their frustration; and they grumbled behind their boss.

They casted a lot to see who'd bell the cat and inform their insensitive boss that evening was fast approaching, and that they should start leaving the riverside.

The cast fell on Tim, Teo's secretary.

Tim was the first man to be recruited, and long before others were. He was practically a founding member. And he was an architectural technologist.

The young technologist walked up to his boss and spoke the team's mind.

While the two men were still at it, Teo's phone rang.

Teo picked up the call and it was his heartthrob. Foye.



Dr Oye wore an eager look that afternoon.

The conversation with President Jimi Jacobs the previous day had given him a gleam of hope.

Given him something to assure him of his establishment even in the new presidential term.

It was October 2017.

When Jimi Jacobs resumed office as the President of Kimberland in July that year, Dr Oye had feared that he might lose his grip on Kimberland's economy.

He'd fought a silent battle to hinder the all righteous man of the people ascending the country's most powerful seat at the Rock Castle.

But then, Oye lost the fight and Jimi Jacobs eventually emerged the President elect.

And then, Oye sent a message to the monstrous shadow behind him. A large cross-continental, multi-national economic body headquartered in the United Kingdom.

The Utopia.

The old man called on the Utopia to withdraw their developed interest in Kimberland for a period of four – if not eight years – of the presidential term, or terms.

As the era of Jimi Jacobs would most likely seem entirely difficult to negotiate with.

But then, it appeared fate had smiled on the fifty-six-year-old Oye again, and he could again dust up his ambition where it lay.

The old man had sighted desperation masked in the guise of goodwill. He'd seen self-service garbed in a cloak of nobility.

Oye found the weak point in Kimberland's high wall and he knew what to do to pressure for a crack.

He'd halted his retirement plans earlier today. He was sure he wouldn't be retiring now as he'd thought all along.

The seated old man picked up his phone where it lay idle on his office desk.

He reclined fully in his seat, smiled broadly and swivelled himself around while he waited for the other side to pick up.

The other side was on the line in a moment.

Oye halted his spin and sat right up. His voice was deep, low and decorous.

‘I have found a crack. Check your email in a minute.’

He hung up immediately and gave a light chuckle. And then, he went through his phone and sent an already prepared email draft.

When the message was sent, he deleted it, emptied his trash folder and slid his phone into his jacket’s inner pocket.

He swivelled his seat around and smiled broadly.

‘It’s going to be a long year.’



‘Where are you at, really?’

It was Foye speaking at the other end of the phone call.

Her slender, lovely voice had an anxious tone that only sounded rather so charming in Teo’s

ears. In the caring manner her cute, feminine voice rolled out the words.

‘You aren’t at your office. And I also checked you at the house? Your number wasn’t going through since I’ve been calling you. Where exactly are you, my Teo?’

Foye almost always added the possessive pronoun when calling her sweetheart’s name. And she’d turned the possessive word more into an endearment form.

Every time Foye called his man ‘My Teo,’ she felt pleased that he was hers. She loved him and would choose to love him over and again.

Foye had always told Teo over a playful talk that his kids as well as she would probably call him ‘Our Teo.’

Teo’s lovely jewel was that funny and playful.

Interestingly, the young architect hadn’t even proposed marriage yet to the light complexioned beauty of twenty-six.

It was Teo's turn to show concern and put her girlfriend's heart at rest.

'Hello, dear,' he said, raising his voice a bit above the rustling sound of nature. 'I'm on a picnic. How are you?'

Picnic was the word that caught Foye by surprise and Teo didn't preempt what'd follow.

'Picnic! Where? Alone?!' Foye was a little confused.

Teo didn't know where to start the description of his picnic idea. 'Let Tim explain to you,' he said; handing over his phone to his twenty-two-year-old secretary.

Tim was totally taken aback but within a second or two, the youngster had calculated the scenario and he knew what to do

Teo was a quiet man and he always found talking something of a big deal. He'd often let awkwardness have its way instead of immersing himself in explaining things out.

Foye had always had to put up with that, in any case.

Tim was Teo's Aaron, his outspoken mouthpiece. He'd represented his quiet boss in design presentations on many occasions.

Teo often talked to himself far more than he talked to others.

His four staff members had always wondered how he'd managed to find a gorgeous and well-spoken woman as girlfriend.

Tim took over the phone call. 'Sis, it's work picnic. We also thought we'd have fun here but we've been here at the Yemija River since early afternoon.'

Foye's voice was calm. 'No worries, little brother. Hand the phone over to your boss.'

This wasn't the first time Teo would make Tim save the situation. And Foye had found a kid brother in the young technologist.

Tim handed the phone back to Teo.

Teo had a smile on his face. ‘So you understand everything now, right?’

Foye’s response was a cutting rejoinder. ‘No, I don’t! Until you speak to me yourself this time.’

‘Ok-ay,’ Teo stuttered. He breathed in and then spoke in a steadier manner. ‘It’s just work picnic, darling. Don’t be cross with me, uh?’

‘Promise this will be the very last time,’ Foye said.

‘I promise, Foye,’ Teo replied.

Foye was pretty fed up. ‘But that was exactly the words you used the last time and here we are at it again today. So I can’t trust you on this, Mr Teo!’

Teo paused for a bit and spoke with a determined poise. ‘Okay. I solemnly swear!’

Foye burst into giggles.

And it was the kind that was simply contagious to a listening Teo at the riverside picnic.

Chapter 4

I NEED to decide right now, Mia breathed.

She leaned against the wall just by her bed and had her arms folded across her chest.

Well, it had been about a week since Mia's mother last visited with loads of wearying concerns.

Mrs Krae always made frequent visits to her daughter in the city and the fragments of her last visit still disturbed the younger woman's mind.

Mia had recently immersed herself in a pool of work and fun activities. To help distract her from the worrisome thoughts her mother's visits left behind.

The ever so vibrant girl had ensured there was no idle moment in her twenty-four hours.

It was about eight thirty in the evening and Mia had just returned from work.

And she only took a little time to freshen up before the worries came back knocking at her door.

Mia shut down her laptop. She'd just watched a film only a quarter way. She'd wanted to simply ease up the emotional stress from work and from life altogether.

But then, Mia only felt more bored after all.

Along with the aching sour in her heart incurred from her mother's callous punches, Mia

also suffered from envy and backlash from her colleagues at work.

The struggle for emotional healing soon turned a struggle for survival for the young, pretty, dark girl of twenty-five.

The intelligent, ambitious Mia only attracted the attention of negative people when she got a few coveted awards over a couple of years.

And with her recent promotion to a senior position ahead of her colleagues who seemed older than her, Mia had only got loads of envy and hate to deal with.

She wouldn't want those ill-wishers to mock her lapses, no. And so the cute girl was trying too hard to hold on to the high ropes in her workplace.

Mia put her laptop aside and sprang up from the bed. She knew she must do something grave to save herself. If she wasn't going to slid into depression.

She leaned against the wall, folding her arms across her chest.

She breathed. ‘I need to decide right now.’



Except for the voice of his heartthrob, every little sound was usually a noisy chatter for Teo. Every time he wanted to come up with a new design.

The twenty-seven-year-old architect would usually invite his lover to his studio when there was a new project.

Seeing his young beautiful perched on a tall stool beside him was everything Teo needed to spark up inspirations when he drew complex designs.

Foye was the outspoken one and she would talk on a free flowing spree.

Teo would always listen without replying while he worked on his drawings; and Foye was just okay with that.

Foye was also the bright and intelligent type. But then, her wide, happy smile always seemed to mask her intelligent look.

But when the twenty-six-year-old talked, her smartness couldn't but sieve through.

Teo's beautiful, light skinned sweetheart had unintentionally inspired him to come up with creative, out-of-the-norm structural designs.

The first time the lovebirds met about a year earlier, Teo was on a trip back from an appointment with a client in Yemija District.

Teo was driving out of Yemija onto the highway that connected Yemija with Kakakhi City.

He saw the woman's car had broken down and she was left stranded, waving down other cars whose speeding drivers barely looked her way.

Teo appeared as the knight in shining armour for the beautiful damsel, when he pulled over to her side with a long, loud screech.

Foye dropped her gaze as the young handsome man stepped out a foot on the tarred street.

Next, she heard the stranger's first words roll out in a cool, deep, husky voice.

‘Hello, are you all right?’

Foye’s gratefulness couldn’t be contained when Teo gave her a lift to the nearest mechanic’s garage. The young woman chattered all through the drive.

Foye talked about her ordeals with the broken car and how grateful she was to Teo. And Teo’s silence and cool composure had signalled both comfort and safety to the charismatic woman.

Foye had thought Teo was merely being a gentleman, giving her space to feel comfortable and express herself.

But she didn’t know silence was the gentleman’s everyday habit.

The young architect drove by a line of magnificent buildings at the site of a proposed private University. He slowed down a little to feed his eyes with the structural elegance.

Foye observed him as they drove by.

She chuckled softly. ‘There’s nothing really special about the structures. It’s all about the box

shapes. As if there are no other shapes in the world!’

Teo couldn’t keep quiet now. It was a spark of interest for him.

He sat up and clenched the stirring wheel in his hands. ‘If structures were to be with just any shape,’ he began, ‘there won’t be angular and structural balance, you know!’

He glanced at her for a brief moment. ‘The box shape you’re talk about gives equal distributions of a ninety degree to every angle. And that in turn balances the structure.’

Teo looked ahead of him, smiling.

Foye had something to counter Teo with, already. ‘People are made to stand on their feet; but when an athlete stands on his hand we applaud them. That’s expertise, you know.’

Teo glanced at Foye a second or two. ‘Who is this young woman?’ he wondered.

He tightened his grip on the wheel and stepped on the accelerator. The car jumped forward with a jerk.

And he chuckled when a line of a counter-argument struck his mind all of a sudden.

‘For how long’, he said, ‘can athletes stand inverted? Every structure needs stability and durability.’ He looked in Foye’s beautiful eyes and turned up his lips in a smile.

But Foye had something to say still. She turned to him.

‘You see,’ she began, ‘the math we need to simply survive in the world is simple arithmetic.

‘But you know, we moved on to factorization, geometry, quadratic equations and then all those applied and industrial mathematics... Are you listening?’

Teo glanced at her with a genial smile, nodded and hummed a yes.

Foye went on. ‘And now, what d’ we have? Humans can fly in the clouds or watch the earth

from space. We grew—and architects needs to grow too!’

Teo stole a long look at her, with a sweet smile brightening his face.

Foye went on. ‘Boxes are not the only shapes in the world. After all, many rocks are not necessarily flat at their bases and yet they’re stable when they stand on one another.

‘Designs should grow into nature. Those structures look psychologically too artificial for comfort.’

Teo pulled over at once with a deft, quick turn; the sleek blue SUV whizzing to a sudden stop.

He yanked Foye’s phone off her hands and punched in his mobile number. And then, he beeped his number on Foye’s phone to have her number, too.

Foye stared all along, looking lost already.

Teo slid the phone back into her hand. His lips parted in a little charming smile. ‘That is my number. Teo’s the name. Please save it.’

Foye glared at him for a second; absolutely lost for words.

Teo whispered. ‘And what should I save your number with.’

The reply rolled out of Foye’s lips in a soft, lovely voice.

‘Foye. Foye’s my name.’



Mia looked around her. Her eyes met with a slim notepad lying idly on the desk.

She picked up the note where she always scribbled her raw plans. She turned to a fresh page, picked up a pen from the pen box, and drew up a table of two columns.

Above the left column, Mia put down the words ‘To Resign’; and above the right, she penned ‘To Not Resign’.

The fact that the ever so positive girl was considering resigning at her workplace because of the moment's stress already signalled she wasn't getting things in the proper perspective.

The recent emotional burdens were taking a toll on her and she knew she clearly wasn't getting it right.

Yet she didn't want to act on impulse and regret her actions later when the storms would've possibly calmed.

Mia had raced herself all through younger years just to impress her mother.

Now, having to embark on another race to pacify envious colleagues at workplace was more tiring for her.

She was tired of the race. Tired of chasing and being chased.

She really loved to take a rest now.

But then, she thought of what she'd do if she resigned. She would certainly become the carcass for the vulture in her mother to feed on.

The only way out to evade her mother's cold, insensitive grip was her work here in Kakakhi city.

She wouldn't want to move back home to live with the ever nagging Mrs Krae.

That'd be a place in the flaming stove; a dozen times worse than the heated pan, she said to herself.

Mia tore out the page in her notepad, squeezed it into a rumped mound and hurled it into the waste bin.

She muttered. 'Brace up, Mia. You've survived living with a lion. Mere dogs can only bark.'

Chapter 5

TEO was about to swim in new waters. And he wouldn't embark on the voyage without the support of his heartthrob.

The hardworking architect was never bored of Foye's endless chatter anytime he worked. He always knew the inspiration he needed would come from her talk.

That afternoon in his studio, Teo reclined himself in a chair while his girlfriend chose to seat on a tall stool.

Teo had given his staff another day off, following the hectic trip to Yemija River the previous day.

The young architect had been racking his head since morning. But he couldn't come up with a solid structural idea for the artificial nature's park design.

He really hoped Foye would come to his aid with a brilliant idea. Like she often did.

Foye had always been aware of her contributions to her man's work. But the young successful business woman wouldn't boast of it.

She was rather grateful she had a responsible man that valued her opinion.

Foye got up and walked around the studio room. She wasn't the type of woman that worked well in the box of formality.

The intelligent girl of twenty-six wandered around the room, her eyes searching through the design pictures on posters and a calendar.

She turned a glance at Teo. ‘You know I’m upset I wasn’t invited for your picnic,’ she said.

She set her eyes back on the design pictures, walking down the wall length with really slow steps.

Teo raised himself to look at her. ‘I’m sorry, darling. I didn’t call you since it was going to be work all day, you know.’

He rested back in the chair.

He felt sorry. He’d planned a serious day out and had denied his really carefree woman a chance to simply enjoy herself with them.

But more than that, the young architect realised the work picnic itself could’ve been more productive with his intelligent girlfriend being onboard.

He wanted to make it up to her. He brightened up. ‘Oh, let’s go there on a personal picnic after the bid—whether I win or not.’

Foye glanced back at his soft hearted man, flashed a smile at him and turned his gaze back to the designs.

She picked up the various detailed sketches the staff members made of the scene.

She checked through them and saw one in which Teo sat on a rock that stood out of the river.

She took note of the reflection of the sun on his man.

She flashed the sketch at him. ‘How did you cope with the sun heat yesterday?’ she queried, tapping at the sketch paper. ‘Now I’m no longer regretting I wasn’t at your picnic!’

Teo smiled. ‘I told you it was total work and stress for us!’

Foye went on chattering. ‘Gosh, even nature won’t save us from itself!’

‘Look, in spite of how beautiful that scenery is, the hot sun or heavy rainfall won’t allow someone to have a nice time with nature here in the tropical region of the world.

‘And despite how comfortable the homes we build are, the fresh breath of nature won’t come into the confines of our four walls!

‘Really, I wish structures and nature can marry themselves. Really!’

Teo jumped up to his feet at Foye’s last words.

He’d found it. ‘Yeah, structures and nature can marry! Thank you! Thank you!’

Teo exuded with incredible excitement and a more incredible zest.

Foye looked at him, dazed at first. But she was almost used to the sudden outburst the ambitious architect usually made in the middle of her chatter.

It was another spark of inspiration, yes.

And Foye was eager to see what great big form it took this time.



That afternoon, Dr Oye was to bring the president answers.

Both Oye and Ojo walked into the president's office with some curious anticipation about the manner in which the important conversation would meander.

Oye wasn't rest assured he had enough sway over Jimi Jacobs to determine how today's discussion would go.

But he was going to push; and really push until something happened.

Jimi offered them a seat and the three men kicked off talk.

Professor Ojo was the first to give input. Jimi asked him for his opinion on the matter Dr Oye raised three days earlier.

Ojo remarked he'd thought it through and that there wasn't any feasible solution to the economic and financial situation.

Other than doing one thing per time as regards investment, returns and development.

Jimi wasn't disappointed in the young Professor. Being an economist himself, the president also knew there wasn't a straightforward way to tackle this.

But then, Dr Oye had raised everyone's hope before the last meeting ended.

It was Dr Oye's turn to sit behind the conversation's stirring wheel.

He sat up, cleared his throat lightly and dropped a little bombshell. 'The only way out is to get a loan, my President.'

Well, that would've been an obvious solution to an economic case. But it was not to be for Kimberland.

Certainly not for a small nation that received a huge debt pardon from the World Bank only two months ago.

It was a feat which Kimberians publicly credited to the newly elected President J. J.'s diplomatic relations.

Far more than they attributed to the financial institution's magnanimity.

Both President Jimi Jacobs as well Professor Ojo stared at old man, looking askance.

'Dr Oye!' Jimi gasped. 'Of course, you're not suggesting that, are you! Not when we just secured the debt pardon from the World Bank!

'Don't tell me that's the solution you took three days to proffer, Dr Oye!'

Oye's lips curved up in a little smile. 'It is; I'm sorry.'

Jimi started in his seat with an angry surprise. 'Are you joking or something?! Huh!'

Dr Oye resumed, in a calm voice. ‘You know, Your Excellency, it is not a big issue, after all.’ He paused and squinted at him. ‘Oh it is. Very much of a big deal, in fact.’

He paused for emphasis, and then went on in a bit.

‘This is where we are. You announcing the debt forgiveness to the public two months ago will make getting another loan never understandable.

‘It doesn’t make sense that a country whose huge debt has just been forgiven some three months ago is already on her way to borrowing even more!’

Jimi sat back, glaring at Oye as he cleverly shot his words at him.

Dr Oye went on, speaking with a matter-of-fact tone of voice.

‘But don’t we all know now it wouldn’t have been an issue at all, if your new administration hasn’t insisted on feeding the public on every detail.

‘You know I warned against the so-called public right to information you were so quick to use to counter me, my President.

‘Now we’ve got all our cards out in one time. Just because of the righteous transparency idea you love so dearly, sir.’

Jimi heaved a sigh as Oye’s words sliced through his heart. The feeling of regret enveloped him already.

He wished he wasn’t that transparent by announcing every step and achievement to the citizens. He wished he could call back the time and undo yesterday.

The young Professor Ojo came to the president’s rescue.

He directed his words at Oye. ‘I won’t agree with you on this, sir. Transparency was one of the watchwords during the campaign.

‘And if you look back, you’ll see transparency has in fact earned us the trust and support of Kimberians.

‘Tell me what’s bigger for a politician than the people’s trust and support!’

Jimi came back with a clear head. ‘Yes indeed; transparency has carried us pretty far,’ he nodded.

‘And besides, government administration isn’t like a cult where you have to keep everything secret, is it?’

Dr Oye resumed, with a deliberate half-smile in his face.

‘Well, it’s not like there’s no way to get a loan. I was only laying out factors that can hinder the implementation of your projects and plans.’

Jimi’s eyes brightened in the instant. ‘Really? Are you saying there’s a practical way out for us all the same?’

Dr Oye sat back and maintained some calm. ‘Yeah... there may be a way, my President; but the policy of transparency you’ve set up may hinder us.’

Jimi couldn't take it again. He yelled. 'Transparency! Transparency! Can't we just stop crying over spilled milk and move on? Huh, Dr Oye?!'

Oye's voice was a little calm. 'I'm sorry, my President. Well, I don't intend to drag the issue. I'm only trying to explain what we may have to do away with if we really want things to work out.'

Both listening men could tell there was more the fifty-six-year-old Oye wanted to say. They glared intently at him in the moment's silence that followed.

Jimi decided to take charge of the awkward situation.

From the oddness in Dr Oye's conversation style already, Jimi could tell the old man wasn't going to have a roundtable talk about this.

Jimi gave a quick thought about it and asked Ojo to excuse the two men.

Professor Ojo was taken aback.

He'd already suspected this might happen with the way the fifty-six-year-old man had been hammering a nail on the transparency idea.

But he didn't expect President Jacobs to ask him, the new Minister of Finance and Economy, to excuse the two men.

As Ojo went out of the doors, he lamented to himself about how he was repeatedly being sidelined in the new administration.

But then, the young Professor was even smarter to know this wasn't just about him being sidelined. Or about a bias the president seemed to be having for his predecessor.

He could smell rat behind him.

But with the way the devious Oye was known to be a master of the game, he knew the clever man wasn't going to use the embezzlement card for a good man as President J. J.

Whatever form it assumed, the scheme was certainly going to be another Adam's apple. The beautiful and good—with a rotten side to it.

For no one was ever smarter than a Devil in negotiations.

Ojo stepped out and closed the doors on two desperate men.

Chapter 6

PRESIDENT Jacobs took his first vacation since he resumed office only a few months earlier.

And it'd become the popular talk in the entire nation's media already.

Jimi had gone on a three-week vacation outside the country and the destination wasn't made known to the public.

While the Vice President acted in the president's position, all that the Presidency could announce to all was that the vacation was only expedient for Mr Jacobs to get things right in his administration.

The entire small nation in Southern Africa was already up with forceful demands on the details of the president's trip abroad.

While the media pressed for urgent answers, the Senate was itself rather clueless on the president's unexpected move.

But the Senate wasn't the last to be thrown in the dark. The president's wife herself knew only next to nothing about her husband's vacation trip.

Demi Jacobs was quick to note that this was the first vacation trip ever her good natured husband would embark on without her.

And the newsmen. Yes, the newsmen would be rather too quick to insinuate an irredeemable crack in the marriage of the most adorable power couple in Kimberland.

If they learnt that Jimi Jacobs wasn't on the vacation trip with his first lady.

Demi never even knew the exact details of her husband's impromptu trip abroad.

But one thing came up clear to her. Her husband went only with Dr Oye.

The president knew his darling wife's stand on Dr Oye.

Demi was an anti-fan of the outgoing Minister of Economy and Finance. And Dr Oye himself could clearly judge that the first lady was against him.

Demi wouldn't just understand how much importance Jimi's projects were that he'd chosen to still work with the scheming old man.

She wouldn't want her husband to fail like some other past presidents after all.

Dr Oye had served as economy and finance minister for twenty years already.

Every new president of Kimberland had vouched to purged the system of the old wine and completely eradicate corruption from the presidential cabinet.

Oye had remained a huge, unmovable stone in the finance and economic minister seat serving through five presidential terms. And despite changing political parties.

Among the expectations and hopes pinned on Mr Jacobs by citizens was the complete disposal of the old wine.

Jimi Jacobs being a good Christian and a man of integrity was elected for a change.

Kimberians were tired of recycling corruption in the nation's presidency as well as in the presidents' cabinets.

And here was the forty-three-year-old Demi Jacobs being the voice of Kimberians with her husband the president.

Within few months of Mr Jacobs' presidency already, Oye seemed to have become an open sore in the first couple's relationship.

Jimi would listen to everything from his wife's lips. But never a single word about Dr Oye.

President J. J. had announced Oye's retirement the month he resumed office.

He'd announced the fifty-six-year-old man would be retired in six months from then. After Oye had completely handed over his portfolio to the incoming minister.

Kimberians applauded their president for the commendable feat.

But with Jimi's swaying mind about Dr Oye now, the first lady was afraid the president might not be able to fully keep his promise.

Demi was of the opinion that the president shouldn't try to build the entire economy in one day. To Jimi, however, it seemed more like a woman's hesitant opinion.

Demi sat alone in one of the large living rooms in the Rock Castle.

She'd just turned off the TV as it was flooded with heated debates on the president's impulsive trip.

Demi had cancelled all her official appearances in public events since her husband left the country.

She couldn't bear to appear in public to confirm the media's recent insinuations that the president left without her.

Demi was frustrated at everything. A tear drop appeared on her face.

'It's funny I'm not losing him to another woman like I have always feared,' she muttered in a rueful voice.

The telephone rang and she went for the call.

It was the Jacobs' family mail that'd arrived. The mails to the Rock Castle were usually sorted out by the Chief of Staff.

The forty-three-year-old woman ordered the private mails to be sent to her study. She dropped the phone after receiving the message headed for the study room.

Arriving at the study, Demi checked through the mails.

Most of the letters had been sent from the orphanages and hospitals the first lady had dedicated her love, time and fortune to.

She decided to open all the mails and read the letters to keep herself occupied.

She smiled as she read the letter the little children she cherished so much had written to her.

She couldn't help but let out her buckled up emotions as she read the handwritten diamonds.

And tears of comfort flowed so freely.

Jimi and Demi couldn't have a child in their marriage. The well-to-do family of two had hoped for it, prayed for it, consulted therapists and planned in anticipation even.

But it seemed nothing was working for the Jacobs when it came to this. And it had been nineteen years down the line already, with them still waiting.

Demi and Jimi had met on a rainy day at the University of Mountana in the Northern Province of Kimberland.

The two were on their way to the Department of Economics when the showers started to pour all of a sudden.

Demi accommodated Jimi under her umbrella to shelter him from the rain.

She didn't know he would take shelter in her heart from the moment the showers ceased.

When the two lovebirds married, and waited for their own children that never seemed to come, they eventually adopted two orphanages in Gardon City where they later settled.

And they took care of the kids like their very own.

Since the president's term began, the couple hadn't got the time to visit their children at the orphanage.

But the grownups had a tiny grasp of their adopted parents' responsibility.

The children had been keeping up with handwritten letters since a few months earlier when their adopted father became the president.

The kids' letters were filled with soothing words. They were like the soothing embrace Demi needed so much.

She held the letters to her chest and cried.

Being the first couple in the country had taken a big toll on Demi and her husband. They barely had a healthy conversation about their family.

Demi feared she was losing her loving husband to the new power summit the family had just mounted.

She couldn't articulate her fears but she knew Jimi was fast becoming another man, a man she wasn't familiar with at all.

And she desperately needed to rescue her man.

Just now, the first lady opened another mail that looked somewhat different and had a different writer's address.

She glanced at its writer's name. And her eyes popped out of their sockets at what she saw.

The letter was signed 'Jimi Jacobs Junior.'

Demi was dazed, terrified and speechless. An icy chill ran down her slender spine all of a sudden.

What could be happening? What on earth could be happening?

The first lady tried to calm her nerves and muster up all courage to read the letter.

Chapter 7

MRS Demi Jacobs read the rather strange letter where she sat in the Presidential study; her hands shuddering with a slight tremour.

The letter was addressed to her husband, Jimi Jacobs. The President of Kimberland.

She followed the words of the handwritten letter with curious, fast rolling eyes. And she read them in her mind, with her silent lips only quivering all the way through.

Dear Dad,

I thought for many years on the first word to say to you when I eventually find you. I still do not know what words to say. So, I will make it simple.

I will introduce myself first of all; so you do not think this letter is sent to the wrong person.

My name is Jimi Jacobs. I am the son of Ninna Robinson, your first love. This is not what I like to do; but because it has been a very long time and you probably may not remember mum, I will do a little introduction of her.

Ninna was the only girl you dated from your second year in high school and through your final year, sir. I am the fruit of your relationship.

Mum is still very much alive. She never said anything ill about you to me through the years she raised me. She also told me you do not know of my existence and that I shouldn't bother you.

And of course, I can assure you she doesn't like you anymore, sir. And she doesn't hate you either. She just respects you from afar.

However, I have wondered many times what it would be like having a father like every other kid when I was little. But mum told me I could be strong without a father; and that I have been.

At first I missed having a father; but later I wanted to boast of my success to my dad. Well, now I am sure I've well gotten over the father thing already.

But then, some weeks ago I started thinking from your perspective. You don't even know I exist. I thought it would not be fair at all if by the end of the day you don't even know you have a son somewhere.

Finally, as I wrote earlier that I have already gotten over the father thing, this might invariably be my first and last letter to you. I would not like to disrupt your peaceful home with my existence. But then, sir, if you like to write back, you are most welcome.

Thank you, sir.

Yours sincerely,

Jimi Jacobs Jnr.

Demi's jaw dropped and she gasped in utter shock.

The letter fell off her hands. And she couldn't believe her eyes with what she'd read. It was a nightmare in broad daylight.

It wasn't a kind of thing anyone expects or prepares herself for. It was an out-of-the-blues shocker to her.

Demi picked up the letter again, straightened it out with both hands, and stared at the writer's name. It was a mixed feeling for the first lady.

And she was totally at loss on what to do.

Should Demi tell her good husband who'd naturally like to know about his grownup son? Or should she discard the letter before he'd return from his vacation trip abroad.

Should she be happy for her husband who fancied the idea of having a child far more than she even did?

Or should she resent him for having a girlfriend in high school? Or, for fathering a child he himself didn't know about?

Demi wondered what exactly she would claim she was resenting her husband for? The forty-three-year-old first lady was at an absolutely puzzling crossroads already.

She just burst into tears.



Jimi paced anxiously in his suite in the Hilton Hotels, London.

It had been eight days since he'd arrived with Dr Ojo. And the organisation both men had come to meet had been stalling an appointment with them since.

Both men had been booked an appointment before they left Kimberland.

But then, on arriving UK, their appointment had been delayed until a day the organization itself would invite them by a phone call in a matter of days.

A day or two had slowly rolled into eight days of waiting; with Dr Oye repeatedly going aside to give the organisation calls.

Jimi couldn't take the long wait they'd been subjected to anymore. He was beginning to be very impatient and desperate to hear they'd been invited over.

He halted his pace and turned around to Oye. Oye was seated in a couch, leafing through a stack of paper documents.

Jimi called. 'Can you put a call to Utopia again.'

'I understand we called them about an hour ago and they said they'd let us know when they're ready for us. Can you at least tell them we're still waiting, uh?'

Oye curtseyed with a slight bow. 'All right, sir.'

Jimi was a little surprised the older man didn't argue out his rash instruction.

Oye took his phone and turned out into the balcony; wearing a half smile as he turned his back.

But then, what Jimi was being corned into only started at the talk he had with Oye a few weeks earlier.

Behind closed doors.



After Professor Ojo had excused President Jacobs and Dr Oye a few weeks earlier, Jimi was eager to hear the economic solution Oye was ready to proffer.

He was seating at the edge of his seat. ‘So tell me, Dr Oye; what do you have in mind?’

Oye began in a low, calm voice.

‘Thank you, my President. I’ve gone through the plans and intended projects again; and as a good citizen, I’ll like you to have a fulfilling tenure. That’s the only purpose of going this far.

‘But then, I want to be sure this conversation isn’t official and that no part of this talk will be divulged to a third party, sir.’

Jimi could no longer bear the wait. He gave a quick response. ‘Don’t worry. This is only going to be between us.’

The forty-six-year-old president looked on with interest, as the older man resumed speaking.

Oye sat up. ‘There’s a financial and economic world organisation called The Utopia. It’s a cross-continental and multi-national body with headquarters in the UK.

‘Utopia gives financial aid and economic empowerment to political regimes and administrations through political leaders.

‘They can loan us whatever amount we need to run your administration. And their loan is without interest.’

Jimi adjusted in his seat. ‘Without interest! That’s amazing!’ he gasped.

Oye gave a slight smile. ‘Yes, my President.’ He went on. ‘They are a good Samaritan organisation and lends their support to nations.

‘The only requirement you need to win their favour is secrecy. That’s the main reason I spoke against your transparency idea.’

Jimi sat back in his seat. He let out a breath of concern and then spoke in a moment. ‘Well, if they’re so good, why do they keep their transaction stuff a secret then?’

Oye looked on for a while, and then his face brightened up with a sudden idea.

‘My President sir, I once questioned that too when I first came across them. And then, I later got their wonderful answer.

“It’s out of humility and goodness,” they explained. “What citizens would love to know that the blooming economy they experience is due to a big debt?” they asked me.

‘They said, “The Utopia solely works for world leaders whose dreams of an economic and political utopia could have been handicapped by drought of funds.”’

Jimi reclined fully back in his seat. He breathed. ‘Hmm, I see!’

The older man was eager to ensure the president didn't later back out after already learning about the plan. He wanted the president's desperation fiercer.

Oye decided to blur the ray of hope he'd given Jimi a little.

He cleared his throat lightly. 'Erm, that reminds me, sir—I forgot to tell you of a little complication that we may probably encounter.'

He paused for a bit as Jimi raised an eyebrow; looking askance.

Oye went on. 'Utopia examines and chooses the nation's leaders they invest in. We don't get to get the huge no-interest loan from them just because we want to.'

Jimi was trying to think and at the same time talk to the man before him.

He thought for a while and then questioned Oye. 'What are the criteria we must meet up with, then? What do we have to do to court their favour?'

Oye was ready with the answer. ‘I’ll take it upon myself to establish contact with them’, he said, ‘and ensure to the very end that we are chosen sir. Don’t worry, sir.’

He quickly added, ‘Erm sir, should I begin establishing contact with Utopia immediately; or should I wait for you to finish with things you have in your hands at the moment?’

Jimi’s reply was pretty instant. ‘No, let’s start immediately, Dr Oye. We don’t have any other option and Utopia seems to be the only route we can take to financial paradise.

‘Besides, you said we have to win their favour. Let’s start immediately. And update me on how things go.’

Dr Oye let out a quiet breath. ‘All right, my President; I will.’

The secret talk had gone absolutely well for Oye.

Now, he could call Utopia to fix them with an appointment at their headquarters in the United Kingdom.



Dr Oye was the one who advised Utopia to delay the appointment. Since eight days he'd arrived UK with President Jacobs.

Utopia, too, had cooperated with Oye to corner the President of Kimberland into a point of desperation.

But then, Oye's goal was beyond here. He simply wanted to be the most powerful man in Kimberland.

He'd served a number of presidents. And now, he thought it was high time a president—no, Kimberland itself—served him.

He simply wanted to stir the hands that stirred the wheel of the whole nation. And he wouldn't ever stop.

Not until he got to drive Kimberland like a huge iron horse.

Yes, Oye was bent on making the good president desperate enough to the point he'd

never question the trickery of what he would be offered.

And now, it seemed the old man had successfully cornered the people's President J. J. into the only thing needed to win Utopia's sly favour.

Simply... Desperation.

For the monster Utopia fed off human's desperation in their ambitions.

Human's insatiable lust for fame. For riches. For power.

And with people's unquenchable desperations, the devilish Utopia continued to enlarge its monstrous worldwide empire.

Utopia counted on several agents on its pyramidal hierarchical structure to get the desperate ones subject their dreams under her.

And without the victims knowing they had walked their dreams right into Hades.

Thanks to Utopia's clever demons the likes of Oye. Agents of Hades too dangerous to ever attempt a reasonable negotiation with.

Oye had excused himself into the balcony in the hotel suite. He sent a text to Utopia to call off the delay when he'd be calling back in a moment.

He waited for a bit and then called.

He went back to the president and notified him an appointment was eventually fixed for about an hours' time.

And Jimi heaved a sigh of relief.

Chapter 8

IT was a chilly Thursday morning. Teo had buried himself in his work since a few days.

The young man had made a home of his little studio. He wouldn't go home to rest or really freshen up. And he'd only kept his body together with ordered fast food.

All the sacrifices the ambitious architect was making was towards designing an impressive plan for Kakakhi's artificial nature's park.

He'd worked all night in his studio. And just about an hour earlier, he'd lay himself down to sleep on the couch in the office space.

Teo's cell phone buzzed within his jean trouser pocket. He dipped his hands into his pocket where he laid.

The young man took out his phone and brought it close to his face, parting his eyes a little open.

He yawned broadly as he peered at the unfamiliar number.

Teo didn't bother raising himself up. He brushed his eyes with the back of his hands as he picked up the call.

The voice that spoke from the other side was a slender female one. 'Hello, good afternoon. Am I on to Forewalls Architectural Company?'

Teo managed to pull out a grunt. ‘Yes you are.’

The caller went on.

‘Well, I’m Mia; and I am calling from VCN. We’ll like to have an interview with you as one of the contesting bidders for Kakakhi’s artificial nature’s park.’

Mia was assigned to conduct an interview with every architectural firm that’d indicated interest in participating in the design bid and contest.

She was also assigned a cameraman to join in her team of two on the interview project.

The first thing the young successful reporter did was to visit the office of the Mayor of Kakakhi. There she proposed VCN’s intention to cover the bidding contest.

She stated the media’s objective as providing adequate information to the public; and so, ensuring a holistic participation and feedback.

Her proposal was well received by the mayor and he assured VCN of his office's cooperation with the media coverage.

Mia was given a list of the architectural firms participating in the bid.

Teo glared at the wall clock at that instant. 'Do you know what time it is, Ms Mia? It's just 8 o' clock. My firm resumes work by nine...'

He paused to swallow, and then finished his words with a cutting tone. 'So, thank you and bye!'

Teo dropped the call and turned off his phone. He was desperate for a nap. He couldn't believe someone would call him by that time.

Teo wasn't an early bird. When he wasn't busy with work, the earliest the young man went to bed was midnight.

And every minute before nine o'clock in the morning was rather too early to discuss work for the young man.

Now, having to work sleeplessly through the night had made the young architect slid into an edgy mood.

And innocent Mia had just borne the brunt of Teo's mood.

Mia was shocked, where she sat in her workplace. She'd made calls to other architectural firm only a few days before.

And she'd just even called to remind them of the interview and to book an appointment with the directors of those firms.

Teo's firm was the last on Mia's list. The young woman couldn't understand how someone could be so rude and brash with words.

She sat back, folded her arms across her chest and wondered with amazement. And then, she clapped her hands a few times and laughed at the drama.

'Imagine this jerk of a man telling me eight o'clock is too early 'cause his company resumes work by nine? Seriously!

‘Why did the pompous fool pick up my call then?!’

She followed her words with a hiss.

Mia had planned to start the interview with Teo’s architectural firm first. It was the closest to her workplace anyway.

But now she’d have to alter her plans.



It was well past two in the afternoon. Mia was just taking lunch with her cameraman, after already making recording appointments with three of the firms on her list.

The two media persons found a nearby restaurant and ordered themselves a meal.

Mia went through her list; holding the paper in her left hand and helping herself with her snacks in her right.

The agile reporter picked out her pen and circled out the three firms they’d made interviews with already. She went on to tick off

the ones she would be interviewing the following day.

She beckoned at the cameraman to hand her the camera; and she took a second look at the footages.

She felt satisfied with the takes.

Mia asked her two-man team to call it off for the day. As people weren't usually in their best performance in the sun heat that formed a character of tropical afternoons.

But then, Mia remembered that rude guy of eight o'clock. She wanted to visit his firm before she called off the day's work.

She wouldn't want him to delay her at all; and so, she'd got to get through this time around to fix a recording appointment.

Mia and her cameraman would drop by at Teo's company on their way back to their workplace.

The two-man team boarded a BRT bus through the busy beltway of Kakakhi City.

They eventually arrived at the Galaxies Building. A dazzling skyscraper accommodating hundreds of city offices.

Mia and her cameraman came off the last BRT at the Galaxies Bus Stop. And they walked down into the huge, tall structure.

Mia brought out her notepad and checked through to see where she entered the exact office number.

She sighted it and it was just the third floor they were headed.

Mia and her cameraman took the lift to the third floor. They came off the lift and headed towards Room 3-45.

Occupied by Teo's firm. The Forewalls Architectural Company.

Contrary to Mia's assumption that everyone in the company would be rude, Tim gave the two journalists a warm welcome; offering them a seat.

Mia explained the purpose of the visit.

Tim knew the kind of man his boss was. Teo hardly talked to his staff and had scarcely even got as much open about his work as the interview would require him to.

Tim knew it'd be pretty difficult to have an interview with his boss about the bidding contest. But then, the young technologist offered to pass the information across to him.

After a few minutes Tim had gone in to meet Teo in his office, he returned with a long face.

Mia knew it was no good news the young dude brought with him.

Tim spoke. 'As much as the Director wants to have the interview with you, he still likes to take a few days to think about it – due to some official reasons...

'Well, we'll let you know what he eventually decides.'

Mia could see that the young dude was only being polite. She was now sure the rude man she spoke to on the phone earlier that day was the boss.

Mia decided to drop her complimentary card.

She also left with them a copy of the letter of permit she got from the mayor's office. The permit simply endorsed her media company's coverage of the bidding contest.

The mayor had stated in the permit that the participating firms should cooperate with VCN so as to ensure a transparent and well reported contest.

But then, Teo had been reluctant outright.

It was now on Tim to convince his boss to step his leg into the public stream.

Tim knew convincing the quiet and yet stubborn man would be as difficult as taming a lion.

But he'd got to do that taming anyway.

Chapter 9

PRESIDENT Jimi Jacobs, along with Oye, arrived back in Kimberland at midnight.

But then, since about one and half weeks Demi Jacobs had come across the letter from the president's unknown son, there'd been a storm of questions raging in the first lady's mind.

And only her husband could calm those anxious curiosities. And with valid answers worth a million dollars.

The moment Demi sighted her husband as he was being welcomed here at the Rock Castle, she wished she could run to him and pour out her questions into his ears.

There in the distance, Jimi was striding towards their official home in the company of an entourage. And he seemed to wear a weary half smile as he talked with the Vice President.

Demi watched from her glass window from within the presidential residence.

She wished Jimi knew what he'd caused already. She clenched her hands into a fist and bit down her lower lip.

The first lady had done enough waiting. Now she would talk to her husband at the earliest opportunity to.

Demi went down to officially receive the president at a large meet room, populated already by state house aides and secretaries.

She soon retired back into their living room to wait for him. She took off her dress and got into her nightgown; finally getting herself ready for bed.

It was after about another forty long minutes the president got into their living room. And he appeared quite exhausted already.

But Demi herself was exhausted from the hurting one and a half weeks' silent waiting.

She wanted to talk to her husband just right then. But before she could utter something, Jimi beat her to it.

'I know you have a lot to talk to me about,' he said, taking off his coat and loosening his tie.

He went on in a second. 'I've missed you too; but Demi, can I, at least, have some sleep before I catch up on everything? I'm very tired, you know.'

He turned into the bedroom, took off his shoes and clothes, took on a towel and turned into the bathroom for a cold shower.

Demi went into the bedroom and lay on the bed; her face towards the wall.

She would have to wait until daylight to ask Jimi what she wanted to know.

Jimi came into the bedroom and put on his pyjamas. He laid on the bed, facing the opposite wall.

And just before Jimi turned off the lights at the bedside switch, he glared at the wall clock.

It was about half past one already. He would be up at most by five thirty in the morning. He heaved a heavy sigh.

Demi swallowed hard in her dry throat; her eyes open all along.

Jimi closed his eyes in the dark. But before he eventually drifted to sleep, the event where he signed the contract with Utopia popped up in his mind.

In pictures as clear as crystal.



The day Jimi and Oye eventually met with the Chairman and CEO of The Utopia in London, the Kimberland President's desperate search for an economic prosperity came to an end with a single contract.

The two men met with the man controlling the big vast Utopia.

Devlyn McCarthy.

Devlyn was a small man behind his executive desk. But the authority in his voice was itself intimidating.

Let alone the overwhelming feel the vastness of his empire stirred up in anyone who came into its seat of power.

Engraved over his head where he perched in his office were the bold words:

THE EMPIRE OF UTOPIA.

As though brandishing them as a menacing weapon, the man also had his first name interpreted below the Utopia appellation.

The words ran:

Devlyn “Fierce Courage” McCarthy: Chairman & CEO.

The small astute chairman welcomed the two men with a handshake and offered them a seat over his desk.

Devlyn didn't give much room for the exchange of pleasantries. He simply went straight to business.

‘Gentlemen,’ he said in a bold, clear voice, ‘I’ve gone through your loan request and I can tell you we’re ready to partner with on the development of the country of Kimberland by offering you a good deal.’

Jimi had a gentle smile. ‘Oh, thank you.’

Devlyn went on. ‘Well, our major policy is secrecy, and I assume you know that already?’

Jimi nodded, accompanying the gesture with a ‘Yes, we do.’

The Utopia CEO took a set of printed documents, leafed through them a moment and handed them over to the Kimberland president.

‘Here are the documents,’ he said; ‘do append your signature on them so we could have the transaction right on.’

Jimi requested for some minutes to go through the documents and Devlyn explained he had another appointment in Asia and wouldn’t want to miss his flight.

Jimi decided to go through the documents in little time.

The CEO offered them a seat on the couch across his large executive office space. The men joined Devlyn again on the desk after Jimi had gone through the documents.

But the Kimberland president had a concern. There was a clause in the contract he wanted to clear his doubts on.

Jimi read out the line to the Utopia CEO.

‘If the loan is not repaid at the stipulated time agreed upon in this written contract, The Utopia shall have a legal claim to some 500 km² expanse of land in the country Kimberland as fine and forfeit for the delay in the repayment of loan to The Utopia.’

President Jimi Jacobs asked Devlyn for a clarification; his look as much quizzical as it was curious.

Devlyn smiled and explained. ‘It’s nothing, President Jacobs.

‘And this is it: If the loan isn’t repaid at the stipulated time, any expanse of land Utopia chooses to use in your country would be taken.

‘The land deal is just there to remind you of the repayment and it serves as the price for a delay in the repayment of the loan.’

Devlyn reclined in his seat and went on in a bit.

‘To further put you at rest, President Jacobs, we crossed out the capital city and those industrial cities listed on the Repayment Section on page D-07.

‘We’ll never be choosing from those listed let come what may. And so, you can put your mind at rest, Mr President.’

The explanation was more than enough to calm the storm in Jimi’s heart. The Kimberland president had resolved in his heart it wouldn’t ever come to losing any part of his country to the lenders.

Jimi leaned back in his seat for a moment and had a second thought. He shut his eyes and heaved a deep sigh, while tussling with the pen between his fingers.

He dropped the pen and folded his arms across his chest. And soon, he decided to trust his wits and take the leap.

He was an economist who knew his onions after all. He knew what and what to do with the loan to be sure to repay before stipulated time.

President Jacobs parted his eyes open. He took up the pen sat up.

And next, he signed the Utopia contract.

Chapter 10

PRESIDENT Jacobs was the first to wake later that morning. And he sat limply at the edge of the bed.

He turned himself around and stared at his wife fast asleep beside him; her back turned on her husband.

It was about 6 am. The president had got up late due to the stress of his overnight flight back to Kimberland.

Jimi watched his wife sleep so deep and he could tell she'd been stressed out putting up with the media insinuations and all.

He'd read the news online and had also heard about it from the Rock Castle when he was away.

But he didn't feel a need to check on Demi with a personal call through his long vacation.

Jimi knew there were apologies and explanations to make to his wife about his sudden trip abroad.

But what the Kimberland president didn't know was that there were more sensitive things calling for his attention in the home.

Jimi stood up and gently walked over to Demi's side of the bed. He leaned on the wall facing her and observed her as she breathed softly.

He took note of a dried stream of tear on her face and just learnt his lovely wife had cried herself to sleep.

He must've really hurt her one way or the other, he mused.

Jimi remembered their journey together of twenty-something years.

The storms they had braced. The waters they had waded through.

Demi was a fragile woman beneath an iron coat. Only her husband knew her vulnerable self.

And this was her being sad and lonely here when he was just by her side.

Jimi felt so sorry. He felt so sorry he'd hurt her this much.

He gently moved near and crouched down beside her. He didn't want to disrupt her sleep.

He stared at her lovely sleeping eyes a moment and wondered how those beautiful eyes ever deserved to shed a tear.

His eyes became moist with tears. He reached a hand to touch her face.

And that gentle touch woke the sleeping first lady.



After a long sleepless night, Teo finished the grand design that had taken away his sleep in the past few days.

He was so excited that he dialled Foye as early as 6 am. He keenly wanted his heartthrob to see the new design right now. Just on her way to work.

Foye was a businesswoman. The young lady ran a chain of convenient stores in Kakakhi City.

She was successful in managing her business already. As it had grown from one little store on a street in Kakakhi to a few numbers in the city.

Foye's goal was to grow until her business was in every major shopping malls across Kimberland.

Foye agreed to stop by at Teo's office, while heading to her workplace.

In the meanwhile, Tim had already hinted Foye about Teo's disinterest in participating in the VCN's interview of the bidders.

He'd also implored the young woman to help persuade Teo to do the interview.

Foye was therefore planning already to meet with her man later today and discuss the issue of the interview. And here was Teo calling to meet already.

Now, beyond persuading Teo, Foye was more eager to see Teo's new design he was so excited to show her that morning.

The young woman was ready to set out on the road when Teo's call came in.

As soon as she dropped the call, Foye ignited her car and headed to her man's office first.



Demi Jacobs came awake at the touch of her husband's hand on her cheek.

‘Oh I woke you!’ Jimi said softly. ‘I’m sorry.’

Demi gently pulled herself up; her husband offering to help her up and she gently refused him.

‘No; I’m okay,’ she said quietly.

She reclined her back on a pillow laid against the dashboard.

Jimi sat down beside her at the edge of the bed. He whispered. ‘Good morning, my beautiful.’

Demi didn't reply with a good morning. She only muttered. ‘Did you get some sleep?’

‘A little,’ Jimi said. ‘How about you? Did you sleep well?’

Demi only pulled out a slight grunt from her throat.

The first lady was quiet awhile; musing on whether to ask her husband about his trip first. Or to simply head at the pressing issue in her heart.

Jimi was silent, too. He didn't want to be ahead of his worried wife. He didn't want to deny her of the right to ask the many questions in her head.

Demi decided to say the things in her mind just however it flowed out.

'I want to ask you many questions, Jimi,' she began in a soft voice. 'I want to ask about your trip with that man Oye and why you seem so distant nowadays.'

She paused for a second or two and continued. 'It's like you're keeping a secret from me and I wanted to ask what the secret is.'

'But then, something else came up and it became more urgent than every other thing bothering me.'

‘I’ve thought about it a million times. It may seem good news for you but it’s mixed feelings I have about it, Jimi.’

Demi paused and adjusted herself. She looked on her husband as he also pinned his gaze on her, listening intently.

‘When you were away,’ Demi went on calmly. ‘I was going through the letters sent to us by our children. And among the letter, I found a letter from your biological son.’

‘His name is Jimi Jacobs.’

Demi paused to watch her husband react.

Jimi was absolutely lost. ‘Demi... Son? Biological son? What are you saying? Which son? You know I don’t have a son... you know that!’

‘We don’t have any other children apart from the ones at the orphanages. What is it you are saying, Demi?’

Demi reached her hand to the cabinet and opened it with a key. She brought out the letter

she had neatly kept in it and handed it over to her husband.

Jimi brushed through the letter in a moment. And then, he calmed himself down to read through again.

He was shocked. He couldn't believe what he read. He knew this was probably not a joke. Because he remembered Ninna Robinson.

He held the letter in his hand with a weak, limp grip. And he glared at his wife with the lines of his face spelling out utter astonishment.

He stuttered. 'Er... Demi... I promise I sincerely don't know about this boy! It's been a very long time, you know!

'What I had with Ninna was just a fling. I didn't get to see her again after we left school. Demi, believe me that...'

Demi interposed quietly. 'I know you don't know about him and I know you didn't do it to hurt me, Jimi. But then, I don't know why I still feel hurt!'

A tear slowly trickled down her face in the moment. Jimi's heart shuddered; and he just stared.

Demi went on.

‘When you went away with Oye – someone I severally warned you to be careful of – I thought the state work was already taking you away from me, and felt comfort in the fact that it wasn't another woman that was getting your exclusive attention.

‘But then, I read this letter and it's like my world's crumbling right in front of me. I don't know what to do. I don't know how to handle this.’

Jimi rolled out a tissue from the cabinet and gave his wife.

She went on, as she dabbed her tears with the tissue. ‘I understand the boy isn't trying to ruin our home. It's right for him to meet you as much as it's right for you to know you have a son.’

She paused for a second. ‘But I still hurt!’ she sniffed.

Jimi held her hand in his and gently squeezed it to calm her.

Demi only broke down into tears and Jimi was there to catch her. He laid her head to his chest and hugged her so tight.

‘I’m sorry, dear,’ he muttered softly. ‘I am really sorry.’

Chapter 11

THAT cold, hazy morning, Teo leaned against a wall in his studio room.

He gazed at his design projected on the opposite wall in 3D pictures; his gorgeous visage even more lit by an accomplished, gentle smile.

He'd invited Foye to come around, to be the first person that would see the completed work.

And her ever supporting girlfriend had promised to stop by on the way to her stores to see the work.

Teo still remembered the genesis of his innovative design.

And that genesis was simply Foye.

It was the moment Foye wished that nature and structures get to marry someday.

It was the day Foye last visited Teo's studio.

Following the fruitless work picnic that the young architect went on with his staff members. In order to find creative design ideas.



That day Foye visited, the young lady had picked up the sketches Teo's staff made to replicate the picnic natural scenery.

She had found among the sketches one picturing Teo sitting on a rock that protuded out from the river.

Foye observed the sun's reflection on Teo that day.

'How did you cope with the sun heat?' she asked him, tapping at the sketch paper. 'Now I'm no longer regretting I wasn't at your picnic!'

Teo smiled. 'I told you it was total work and stress for us!'

But Foye didn't stop talking. 'Gosh, even nature won't save us from itself!' she blurted.

She called her man's attention to what she observed.

'Look, in spite of how beautiful that scenery is, the hot sun or heavy rainfall won't allow someone to have a nice time with nature here in the tropical region of the world.

'And despite how comfortable the homes we build are, the fresh breath of nature won't come into the confines of our four walls!'

She let out a frustrated gasp. 'Really, I wish structures and nature can marry themselves. Really!'

That was the spark that ignited the flame in Teo's creative faculty that day. The young man jumped up to his feet at the words her woman's uttered last.

It was eureka for the young ambitious architect. He found it at last.

'Yeah,' he exclaimed with incredible excitement, 'structures and nature can marry! Thank you! Thank you!'

Teo scribbled down the thoughts that day.

What occurred to him in Foye's chatter was the possibility of having homely shade and nature's freshness combined in an outdoor scenery.

He'd finally got what exactly to do with the design towards Kakakhi's artificial nature's park.

After Foye left, the young man picked up a pencil, sat down in a couch and made a rough sketch of the idea on his sketch pad.

He re-sketched the picnic scenery – the scenery of the Yemija River. He went ahead to sketched out a house structure in the scenery.

He knew a living residence couldn't be in the park. That would be like designing a garden for a house, he thought.

He heaved a sigh and tore out the page he'd been drawing on.

He stood up from the couch where he'd been sitting, tore out a clean page from the sketch pad and pinned it down on a drawing board in the small studio space.

The young architect walked back to his seat again and stared at the words he had scribbled down when Foye was around.

Just as soon, he ran back to the drawing board and began drawing out a new sketch.

He started by drawing out one thing at a time from the drawn illustrations of the last picnic.

Teo sketched out the river first, and then replaced the vegetation at the bank of the river with a grass lawn.

He sketched out the sun and then drew a bench at the bank of the river.

Just then, the young man knew he'd met with a wall again. He stood upright and walked around the room space, thinking hard.

His goal was to make a sketch of an artificial nature's park that offered comfort, shade from the sun and rainfall.

And which at the same time availed visitors of the abundant freshness in nature.

But here in his sketch, there was no shelter to protect visitors that came to enjoy the park's beauty.

Teo remembered what'd brought up the idea of shelter in the first place. Foye had pointed out that Teo was beaten by the sun while he sat on the rock.

Just then, Teo remembered he was sitting on a rock. He reckoned it was more nature-oriented replacing a sitting bench with rocks.

Teo went back to his drawing board and erased the bench with a pencil eraser. He then sketched out little lumps of rock marking out the landscape in strategic locations.

The young man stood upright and stared at the rocks awhile.

Instantly, a flash of inspiration struck his mind.

‘Mm! I can make the rock both the shelter as well as the bench,’ he mused. ‘I can make caves out of the rocks!’

He paused a second; standing with hands akimbo.

He laughed out loud. ‘A tourist cave of the 21st century man!’

Teo bowed himself over the drawing board again and erased the little rocks.

In their stead, he sketched out huge heaps of cave structures in geometric shapes and with strategic sunlight inlets.

Teo planned that his ‘Tourist Caves of the 21st Century Man’ in Kakakhi’s Artificial Nature’s Park would be constructed with the rammed earth technology.

A 21st century wall construction technology developed entirely from the ancient earth and clay building mechanism.

And that was it for Teo. He sprinted up, clenched his fist and yelled out a loud shout of great discovery.

He found it, yes: eureka.

Now the rest of the intricate structural design was going to be a piece of cake.

For his lovely Foye had inspired something out of him.



Foye was standing right before her ever quiet man; looking dazed.

She'd just arrived at Teo's office that early morning on his impromptu invite.

Today, Foye was greeted with a different side of Teo that she hadn't met before.

Teo had welcomed the beautiful young woman with the warmest smile she'd ever seen him give.

The man was so excited about his new design that he went on smiling and talking on a spree. And Foye could only give a gentle smile at his quiet man's dramatic excitement this time.

The young woman got herself a seat and interposed. 'Ok-ay, Mr Teo... may I now see the genius design your lordship has come up with?'

Foye thought her question would draw Teo out of the pool of excitement or draw the pool out of him, at least.

But then, to the young woman's amazement, the question was even the factor that made her man completely overwhelmed and submerged beyond possible rescue.

Teo looked around and found a necktie. He went to Foye and offered to blindfold her.

Foye couldn't contain her sweet amazement. Something that could make her Teo this restless in excitement had to be really fantastic.

She burst into chuckles of laughter as Teo blindfolded her, held her hands and led her to his partitioned studio space.

Teo stood her woman in front of the screen projection of the 3D structural plan; and then, he lifted off the blindfold.

Foye's eyes parted open to the sight of the grand design and she gasped out in utter surprise.

‘AH!! This is... This is... Big!!’

Teo leaned on a wall behind his lady, crossed his arms across his chest and smiled gently. He knew how impressed Foye was.

Foye turned around to find him and rushed up to him. ‘Ah, my Teo! You are a genius, darling! You are so genius. I love you!’

She pulled him forward and wrapped her arms around him. ‘This is just so wow! So, so awesome! I love you, my Teo!’

Foye rushed up to the design again and gazed at it with a beautiful smile on her face. She was so impressed by her man and every gesture could tell the obvious.

Teo stepped close to her and wrapped his strong, muscular arms around her from behind.

Foye looked up at him at him and flashed a sweet smile.

She whispered. ‘I heard VCN came to your office to fix an interview for the contest. I heard you didn’t really want to be interviewed.’

She looked ahead and gently rocked herself in his arms. ‘You should take the exclusive, my Teo. I want you to shine. I want you to win.’

Teo stilled her and looked down on her with an askance gaze. ‘Er... who told you about it?’

Foye laid her head in his chest as her man wrapped his arms around her. ‘Does that matter? Just promise me you’ll go through with the media interview.’

Teo chuckled. ‘I think I know who told you. It’s Tim, isn’t it?’

Foye turned around abruptly and held his hands in hers. ‘Forget who told me, my Teo. Just promise me you’ll take the interview. Please!’

Teo parted his lips in a little smile. ‘Okay, I promise.’

Foye warmed up to him. ‘Oh really?!’

The young woman was delighted his man would soon be gracing the screen. The screen of one of the biggest TV stations in the country.

Teo held her shoulders warmly. ‘I will; trust me.’ he whispered.

Chapter 12

IT was a dry, foggy Friday morning in late December 2017. And Christmas was only three days away.

The humid harmattan cold was here already and the cities and districts in Kimberland were fast adapting to the change in season.

Teo was nervous. It was the third time he'd been excusing himself to the washroom.

Tim, his right hand man, could guess why his boss was restless though. He knew Teo was camera shy.

Teo had fixed the exclusive with Mia for the fifth working day in the week. He was afraid he might have the entire week jinxed if the interview was held on Monday.

The young architect didn't want to spend an entire week in a bad mood, should he not fare well in the interview.

But then, it wasn't the camera that'd troubled the still waters in Teo's mind. It was rather the absence of Teo's heartthrob in the midst of the strangers around.

And every time Teo made a visit to the restroom, it was to dial his woman who was already running late.

Foye eventually arrived after some minutes wait.

The beautiful young woman perched on a seat adjacent to her man. Her presence installed in the room gave Teo both the psychological and emotional support he needed.

Teo's responses to the interview questions were apt, intelligent and well-coordinated. Mia was satisfied with the way the young architect delivered his responses.

The interview soon came to an end.

Teo had a warm handshake with the journalist. 'Thank you very much, Ms Mia,' he said in a cool, soft voice.

'And merry Christmas,' he added, with a warm gleam.

'Same to you,' Mia replied with a gentle smile.

And she added, 'You really did well today, sir.'

The young woman had absolutely excused Teo's rudeness of the other day.

For the gentleman was simply likable after all.



Demi Jacobs consented to Jimi's reunion with his new found son.

Jimi always knew he had a real gem for a wife. He knew Demi wouldn't hide how she really felt.

Demi usually didn't hesitate on showing how angry she was with her husband. And the moment she'd expressed her mind, she forgot about what bothered her already.

The early morning Demi told her husband she was hurt by the idea of a biological son to him somewhere, the hurt didn't live to see the brightness of morning light.

It was Saturday evening today, two days before Christmas. And Jimi had returned home earlier to spend more time with his wife.

If time together could mend the crack in the first couple's home, Jimi was ready to spend as much time as possible with his woman.

He desired to have his ever cheerful wife back once more.

But then, what the handsome forty-something didn't know was that he was the very one needed back.

He'd somehow grown more distant, more calculative... perhaps more guarded with his woman. Since he mounted the nation's seat of power there at the Rock Castle.

Jimi was the one whose crowned head lay uneasy. He was the one who was changing.

The couple sat together in the flower garden within the Presidential Villa of the Rock Castle.

Jimi asked to call the boy on phone – his new found son. 'Perhaps, this is a Christmas gift for our family,' he whispered with a genial smile.

Demi nodded; her lips curled up in a gentle smile.

Jimi wanted to carry his wife along in the process of uniting with his biological son. And the

gentleman explained to his lady that he didn't want to hurt her by sidelining her.

Demi gave a warm smile of consent, wondering how blessed she was to have an understanding man for a husband.

The forty-six-year-old man dialled the number, which he'd saved up on his phone. And while the phone rang on the other side, he put the call on speaker.

Soon the call was picked up and the long awaited voice came up. 'Hello...'

The president swallowed and his eyes widened.

He could hear himself in the rather deep and bold voice of the man on the other end. It sounded almost exactly like his when he was about thirty.

He couldn't believe he was on phone with his own son.

Demi wrapped up herself in a bundle as a chilly breeze blew over her. She was nervous, too.

Up until now the biological son issue was more or less an idea to the first lady. But now it seemed to have come to life right in front of her.

‘Jimi Junior is probably real,’ she muttered. ‘There is really a biological son!’

Jimi parted his lips in a gentle stammer. ‘Hello...’

The person on the other end went on just as soon. ‘Who am I speaking with, please?’

Jimi was as still as a steel bar. The man’s voice sounded even more particularly like his.

Demi knew her husband was thrown off-balance already. She just held his hand in hers and gave it a warm squeeze.

Jimi was able to get himself together in that instant. ‘Am I speaking to Jimi Jacobs Junior?’ he said in a cool, composed voice.

The man's voice at the other end leaped a bit. 'Yes, you are. And who am I speaking with, please?'

The president's tenor took on a warm, fatherly candour. 'I am Jimi Jacobs and I saw your letter. Merry Christmas, son.'

Demi touched the screen of the phone and turned off the speaker mode. She motioned for her husband to feel free to talk with his new found son in private.

The first lady quietly stood up took a walk in the garden.

After few minutes' walk, and at a time Jimi must have ended the call, Demi walked back to her husband.

When she stepped behind Jimi where he sat on the concrete seat, Jimi had his head sunken in-between his laps.

Demi touched her husband on the shoulder. 'How was the call? Didn't it go well? Why are you sitting like this?'

Jimi raised his head and spoke in a weak, low voice. ‘I must’ve caused the boy a lot of pain in life!’

Demi took a seat beside her husband and watched him speak.

Jimi heaved a sigh. ‘He said meeting with me now would have a negative impact on his work and he doesn’t want that. He simply doesn’t want to meet with me.’

He swallowed and faced his wife. ‘You don’t think he has harbored a lot of resentment for me, Demi?’

Well, the first family was like an open book for the entire nation.

It was no secret that the first couple had no biological children. The couple’s adoption of two orphanages was also general knowledge.

Demi was curious to know what made her husband think in that manner. ‘What work does he do?’ she asked. ‘Did you ask what work he does?’

Jimi retorted. ‘No, I didn’t.’

Demi couldn’t help interposing with concern.

‘Darling, how won’t you show the slightest curiosity? That would’ve convinced the young man you really wanted to see him if you showed a bit of interest in his life, huh?’

Jimi bowed his head again.

He mumbled. ‘It’s not like I had a son yesterday; how would I know I should ask about his work? My wish to see him should itself suffice for every other thing, uh?’

He raised his head and faced his wife. ‘Don’t you think so?’

Demi thought for a while and then spoke up. ‘Okay... Let’s assume he’s doing a work that puts him in the public eyes and he wouldn’t want to be seen with the president.’

She gave him a nudge. ‘Just let’s keep contacting him every now and then, so we can get to know him more.’

Demi paused and held his both hands as she finished her words.

‘He grew up well without you,’ she said in a soft voice; ‘so, he doesn’t resent you, my husband. That’s what I think.’

Jimi gently nodded and curled up his lips in a little half smile.

Now he dearly wanted to know more about Jimi Jacobs Junior.

Chapter 13

EVER since Oye returned from the trip abroad with President Jacobs, the former had been restless.

He'd thought the loan deal would seal his place in president's cabinet. But the fifty-six-year-old economist hadn't received any call from President Jimi Jacobs in weeks now.

It seemed Oye was denied of pieces of information about the president, too.

For the only information about the president that the outgoing minister of economy had was mere public information.

The old man judged that Jimi Jacobs had only used him and he couldn't believe he was being dumped already.

The six months that was earlier announced that Dr Oye would be retiring was just a few weeks away.

And here was the man still unsure of his future, despite the plans he'd meticulously schemed.

Well, Oye hadn't only been waiting for President Jacobs to invite him for talk. He had also tried a couple of times to meet with the president.

And the president had kept denying Oye a chance to meet.

As desperate and frustrated as Oye was, he knew he could only wait and hope the president was going to call him up soon.

There was nothing more he could do. And, well, that frustrated him even more.

But just then, and as though out of the blues, Oye received a summon from the president.

Dr Oye sprang to his feet immediately and made for the door.

He was dead curious to know what Jimi Jacobs was scheming.



Dr Oye didn't have to wait at the presidential office reception before he could see President Jacobs.

And within, Jimi was waiting already. Seated in an arm chair at the vanguard of the office furniture.

Jimi had a bright welcome smile and it served to calm Oye's troubled mind.

Oye perched himself in a two seater couch adjacent to the president's seat and his eyes lingered on the forty-six-year-old man.

The president had his attention fixed on some papers in his hands. He'd got a lot to catch up on. And having a meeting with Dr Oye was only one of them.

He soon dropped the papers in his hands and faced the middle-aged man waiting on him.

'Well, have you been all right, Dr Oye?' he queried.

Oye knew Jimi wasn't really asking a question. He could tell from the president's body language that his words were merely a statement to pass time with.

Jimi proceeded without expecting a reply. 'I must really say thank you for the Utopia deal. You've saved Kimberland in this dare situation and I really appreciate you.'

Oye found it quite interesting that Jimi was disguising his personal ambitions as the nation's

need. He gave a quick, silent smirk that went unnoticed.

The hypocrisy of this boy really knows no limit!

Jimi went on in a bit. ‘I trust the comradeship I’ve built with you over the past few months since I came into office is enough to make us become some sort of partners...’

He paused a little as Oye looked on, absolutely eager to know where the president was driving at.

Jimi sat up. ‘I’ll cut to the chase. As the President of Kimberland, I would love to appreciate you for the good deal you got the country.

‘So, name it. How should we repay you, Dr Oye?’

Oye’s lips curled up in a light smile.

Aw, there we go again with this hypocritical ambition!

But then, the outgoing minister of economy and finance wouldn't want to miss this chance. It was the rare opportunity he'd been waiting for all along.

And there was it as a blank cheque right in front of him.

Even still, he mustn't go on scrambling for it like a desperate old fool. Lest he even got the blank cheque torn in-between his hungry fingers.

He'd got to act all cool, calm and composed. And he definitely didn't want to lose being that master gamer who called the shots.

Oye sat up in a moment and had a calm speak.

'Well, I'm grateful I could render the little help I've rendered to your administration already. And as a Kimberian, what more can fulfil me than seeking out the progress of this nation?

'Your Excellency, I'll only love to continue to render my good service to the progress of Kimberland by maintaining my position in office.'

Jimi was smart enough to preempt that Oye would ask to remain in his office; and the forty-six-year-old president had his counter measures already.

Jimi took over the talk.

‘Well, just a while ago I said we two have built a working comradeship. That’s why I’ve thought it through. I only wanted to hear you out before I propose my deal to you.’

He paused a second while the retiring old man looked on with eager eyes.

Jimi resumed. ‘Being a minister like every other person in the cabinet won’t give you enough room to maximize your innovative ideas for Kimberland. Don’t you think so?’

Oye only stared at the president; sitting like drenched little fowl.

The president went on. ‘So, I planned to make a you Special Adviser to the President on Economy, Budget and Finance. It’s the new office I’m creating just for you.’

Jimi finished his words with a smile.

Dr Oye could see the real reason the president made that move. Jimi didn't want to fail the people he'd promised six months before that he would retire him.

Allowing Oye to maintain his position as the minister of finance and economy would bring about a negative reaction from the people.

And the people's president wouldn't allow that.

Dr Oye wasn't expecting things to go south. He'd thought he'd become so important in the administration that Jimi wouldn't relegate him to the background come what may.

Oye wanted to speak but the words weren't coming.

He wasn't sure if the Special Adviser position was in fact better than being a minister. It wasn't a position Kimberland knew about.

Unlike several countries in the world where there were positions of special advisers to the

president of the nation, Kimberland was among some other countries that didn't have the special adviser positions in the presidential cabinet.

Oye was short of words when Jimi came in with a consolation for the old man.

'You know, being a special adviser is like controlling the whole nation because your advice moves the presidential hands which in turn drives the nation.'

Jimi finished his words. 'But since this is something so sudden, I will give you time to think about it.'

Jimi got up and extended his hand for a handshake. 'Let me know the moment you are ready to resume your new office,' he said.

Oye stood up and refrained his hand.

He'd come to admit this was the best Jimi could do for him. He knew the president wouldn't grant his desire to retain his ministerial position.

The fifty-six-year-old man decided there was no reason to waste more time thinking without an end about an unchanging verdict.

Oye had his response ready.

‘I don’t need to think about serving the nation from a different office. It doesn’t matter where exactly I serve my dear country, sir.’

‘I accept the new position as a Special Adviser to Your Excellency, sir.’

‘That’s great!’ Jimi exclaimed. He went over to his office table, took a ready letter of appointment and handed it over to Oye.

He shook hands with the older man. ‘Congratulations on your new appointment, Dr Oye,’ he said.

Oye received the letter with a half-smile. ‘Thank you, my President. I will do my best in serving this nation through your administration, sir.’

Jimi nodded. He also decided to explain some other things.

‘Well, since Kimberians are new to this and there might be objections to the new position, we won’t have a public occasion to swear you into office.’

Jimi looked into Oye’s eyes as he spoke his next words.

‘And it won’t be announced in the media. Well, I’ve learnt so much from you in the past few months. And the top lesson is secrecy.’

Now Oye could see the real motive behind the president’s clever act all along.

At all cost Jimi wasn’t going to associate with the old wine which Oye was standing for.

Jimi was going to be using Oye, while also keeping him at arm’s length.

It hurt the old man he never knew the president was fooling him all along. How on earth did he not see this?

While Oye was heading out of the presidential office, Jimi’s comeback at him a while ago popped up in his head.

It won't be announced in the media. Well, I've learnt so much from you in the past few months. And the top lesson is secrecy.

He scoffed aloud. 'That sick...!' He hissed.

Oye was at loss for curse words already. He could only see himself in the man he was dealing with.

Now he would be needing help from hades again.

Oye would be needing Utopia's backup soon enough.

Chapter 14

SUNRISE and sunset every day soon turned several days into a full month.

It was late January 2018 and that long awaited day eventually came for Teo and other architects in Kakakhi City.

It was the day for the bidders' designs for Kakakhi's artificial nature's park to be brought before the eyes of the people.

And the best design was to be decided by a small group of judges via a public contest.

The large Kakakhi City Hall was filled to capacity.

The event could have been a pure professional bid, where the contract would be awarded to the architectural firm with the best quotation.

But then, the mayor was insistent on having the best design for his maiden project in his office. And he knew the best quotation wouldn't necessarily show the type of design he desired.

It wasn't just a mere project for the politician. It was a way to inscribe his name in Kakakhi's book of history.

Teo attended the bidding contest as a participant. His woman Foye and his staff member Tim accompanied him to the event.

Teo's interview had already been aired on VCN TV channel. He'd also prepared well for today's contest. He had decided to do his design presentation himself.

The young dreamer mounted the stage, composed himself and went ahead to present his innovative design with a detailed slide show.

When Teo was about to be overwhelmed by a nervous shrill, he stared at his woman sitting somewhere in the audience.

When the young man's presentation eventually came to an end, the audience got up on its feet and lauded the innovative design with a thundering applause.

But then, a good presentation speech and slideshow seemed not to matter in deciding the winner of the contest.

The look on Architect Pius Benson, Principal Partner of Stone and Mortar Architectural Consult – the look in the man's face did spell that out in every detail.

The big, fat man was also a participant in the bidding contest.

Stone and Mortar was a well-established company architectural in Kakakhi City.

The company had executed many big projects, not only in Kakakhi, but also in several other cities in Kimberland.

Teo knew since the beginning of the contest that he was up against the big guns in the industry.

When the young dreamer had visited the washroom earlier that morning, he'd overheard a conversation between two participants.

The men talked about Stone and Mortar. They were sure Pius Benson's company was going to win the bidding contest.

The men stressed the fact that it wasn't going to be about the innovativeness of the design after all; but all about Architect Benson's top connections.

Teo knew the rumor was valid.

And with the arrogant smirk in Mr Benson's face as Teo returned to his seat, only time could tell if the young dreamer's hopes wouldn't be submerged in the proud waves of reality.

But today only reminded the young man of that scary day in the University.

It was the day he had arrived at the furthest part of a dead-end road.



It was Teo's last day of his final exam in the University. And the young boy was sure he would clear his papers in fantastic grades.

Teo was a top student in his class. And he'd always been a hard worker since he was little.

But then, the good boy was caught with a rough paper within his locker during an exam. At about fifteen minutes to the end of the paper.

The rough sheet contained workings that were roughly related to the examination course.

Teo didn't know how the strange sheet of paper got there.

The boy was pretty sure he checked his locker before the exam commenced and he hadn't taken notice of that implicating thing.

The handwriting on the piece of paper wasn't his. But who would believe him in such a case as that?

The penalty for a candidate caught in any act of exam malpractice at the prestigious University of Kakakhi was outright expulsion.

The young dude had no defender to argue his case with the disciplinary committee.

Rumour had quickly spread among the students in Teo's Department that the high flying final year student was a cheat.

There was absolutely no cleanser that could clean up the boy's soiled reputation.

Teo's mother admonished him to talk to God himself. She'd been praying to God for her son since the first day Teo told her about the case.

Now, she'd asked her son to tell it to God himself like a child talks to a father. She asked him to pray to his Heavenly Father to save him in that mess.

Teo had been a Christian all his life; but he hadn't ever found a reason to look up to God for help.

The boy had always had things his own way and got things he wished for on a platter. He'd always prided in both his good fortune as well as his intelligence to pave ways for him.

The young boy knew he had reached a sky high wall. It was certainly the end of the road. Everything he prided in could only get him this far and never beyond here.

His years of studying for a degree program in architecture was soon to come to a futile end.

He couldn't imagine leaving the University after years of study and with no record of study.

He needed GOD. He needed His almighty help.

Teo knelt down and talked to the Everlasting Father through His Blessed Son Jesus Christ.

‘Help me, Lord God!’ he cried. ‘Please, help me out, my Saviour!’

Soon enough, a doctorate student in the Department showed up and explained he studied in the examination venue the night before the exam.

He explained he was a lecturer at another college and he had used the working sheet to prepare for the class he’d be taking his students the day following.

He explained he didn’t know he left the paper behind in the locker.

The man showed his lecture notes to the disciplinary committee to confirm the similarity both in the handwriting as well as in the content. He also showed the committee his staff ID card.

The man apologised for the problem he’d caused by his own mistake.

And Teo’s expulsion was lifted soon after.

Teo was absolutely astonished. All the years of his hard work as an undergraduate would have gone down the drain if not for the saving grace of God.

He admitted that the end of his strength was only the beginning of the power of God.

Teo became devoted to God ever since. And from that day the young dude learnt to look up to God for help.



Teo returned to his seat in the midst of other participant of the bidding contest.

Since the day he submitted his tender and design, the young man had been praying and fasting for an outstanding success.

This time again, the ambitious young man was putting his total faith in God's absolute omnipotence.

Knowing he was up against the reputable and famous architectural firms in the industry, Teo could only pray for a miracle.

He didn't depend on logic and reality anymore. For reality itself was disheartening.

He looked up to God for what only He could do. He looked up to God for a miracle.

A seven-man judging panel had been formed for the contest by the mayor. The judges would decide on the winning design.

The great number of the event's audience in the City Hall did make a great impression on the mayor.

Knowing how much applause he had received since he announced the contest, the mayor wasn't ready to trade the people's praises.

He wanted to win the people's heart even more.

Excited about the impressive turnout, he'd earlier instructed the panel to make the judging process be more about the designs than about the architect or company who created them.

But that seemed not to suffice for the overjoyed mayor of Kakakhi.

Just now, an absolutely thrilled mayor picked up the microphone and announced he was going to empower the citizens to judge the best design for their park themselves.

He decided the members of the audience were going to participate in the decision and vote for their best design.

It was going to be the first time in Kakakhi's modern history when such a professional decision would be put in the hands of the public.

The politician had a quick brief with the committee and got them acquiescing to his new mandate.

Teo wished he had brought all his four men staff members to at least increase his votes by three points. He had only come with Tim out of the four.

The vote was conducted. And the fraction of the voters that chose Teo's innovative design led the others with incredibly wide margins.

Teo's design had the highest number of votes. The young architect couldn't believe what just happened.

It was like a daydream. It was larger than life.

It was... a miracle.

Teo's eyes were damped with tears of joy. He was so happy he couldn't contain it. He shed a tear and laughed at the very same time.

Winning the contest meant the young architect would also be awarded the exclusive supervision of the construction.

It was the biggest contract Teo would ever get since he became an architect.

His dreams were coming true much earlier than expected.

He caught Foye's eyes in the far distance as she gazed at him with delight in the audience.

Foye winked at his cool, admirable gentleman.

Teo muttered with a smile. 'Foye... we made it!'

Chapter 15

IT didn't take long for Teo to grace the screens of all broadcast TVs in Kimberland. Following his impressive win of the design bid.

The news waves eventually found their way into the Rock Castle in the capital Gardon City.

And now President Jacobs decided to reward the meritorious design by inviting the architect for a private dinner.

It was February 2018 already. Teo got the invitation to have a dinner with the first family at the powerful Rock Castle.

The rumours of the invitation soon garnered more praises for the young architect.

Many considered the young dude as a fortunate man, whose hard work was eventually bringing him before kings.

Many also had the opinion that President Jacobs had invited Teo with an ulterior motive.

They reasoned that the president was only an opportunist who wanted to use the rising fame of the young man to increase his political ratings even more.

But then, what clarifies a blurry line is only time. And only time would make the president's intentions come out clear.

Like oil stands out of water.



Dr Oye's new office was well furnished with tasteful furniture and classy woodwork.

There was almost nothing the fifty-seven-year-old man could raise an eyebrow over in the interior design of his new office.

But then, there was yet a single thing the former minister might want to complain about. And that was the location.

The location of the new office spelt out the word secrecy as though shouting it into Oye's face. It was like a rude joke on the old man.

Oye couldn't believe his feet were leading him further down the storeys when he was taken to the new office that morning.

Oye was led by an aide through a long passage in the Presidential Office Building of the Rock Castle.

After walking a minute or two, they came to a staircase at the end of the hallway. But rather

than heading up, the leading official only headed downwards.

Oye followed with curiosity as the two men descended through the long stairway.

The descent went on for a couple of minutes. When the men reached the first floor and the aide again headed for the stairs going down, Oye couldn't contain his shock.

He gasped. 'Where are we going?!'

The aide pointed downwards and muttered. 'The basement, sir.' He followed his words with a curtsey.

Oye stood still for a second and swallowed hard.

The aide motioned to him. 'Shall we, sir?'

Oye picked himself up and trudged behind the state house official as they mounted down the stairs to the basement.

Oye couldn't believe his eyes when he got to the basement. He came to his office door and saw

his name on the door tag. It was the basement indeed.

This was another of Jimi Jacob's card shoved into Oye's face. It was simply paying back the old man in his very own coin.

It was Oye's 'Secrecy' epitomised.

The old man's heart was broken; his spirit was dampened. He clenched his fist as he stood in front of the door and stared at his name on the door tag.

He was furious. He was very furious; and so much he was at loss on what to do.

He yanked off the keys from his guide's hand and dismissed him. He turned the key through the keyhole, opened the door and walked into his office.

In the office, the old man could find consolation in the executive touch the interior design had.

He remembered his new position.

He smiled to himself. ‘I’m a Special Adviser to the President, after all!’



The introverted Teo had to honour the invitation of the first man in the country. A flight had been booked for the young man.

Teo was nervous. He’d removed his bowtie the fourth time now. He wasn’t used to the formal outfit.

If everything was left to Teo, the young man wouldn’t have minded to dine with the nation’s president in his usual T-shirt over a pair of jean trousers.

But his lady wouldn’t allow that. Foye had gotten her man a tuxedo with a bowtie to grace the presidential dinner with.

Teo wouldn’t give up on his complaint.

‘Foye,’ he called, ‘I don’t need to go through this stress, huh? It’s just a dinner after all. I mean, it’s just basically food and talk.’

‘This formal stuff will eventually give me indigestion, you know. Especially this bowtie of a thing.’

Foye wouldn’t take that. ‘No, that’s not correct, my Teo,’ she retorted. ‘It’s not mere food and talk. It’s ceremonial.’

She squared up to him. ‘Why will you go in your casuals, in fact? And you know it yourself that bowtie is essential with the tux in this context, huh?’

‘Photos of you with the president’s family will be taken and published in newspapers, you know. So you just have to look good, my Teo.’

But then, every time Teo put on the bowtie, he did sweat profusely due to the hot February weather.

The brief humid harmattan season had given way to the tropical heat that usually goes before the raining season.

Foye eventually surrendered and allowed his man go without the tie.

She encouraged Teo to keep the tie with him and that if he ever felt more comfortable putting it on – especially in an air conditioned dinner hall, he could always use it again.

Teo eventually left for the Rock Castle in Gardon City. And the young architect was given a warm welcome by the first family.

The dinner was held at the Rock Castle.

It began with a brief photo session by media reporters. And then, the reporters were dismissed and the private dinner was held between the first couple and the young architect.

Rather than a simple handshake, President Jacobs had given the young architect a long, warm embrace.

And it had worked to calm the young man.

Teo became more relaxed and enjoyed his evening with the warm, hospitable Jacobs.

Chapter 16

SEVERAL many weeks rolled into many months. It was December 2018 already; and it had been a year since President Jacobs signed the Utopia loan deal.

The President had only a year more before the repayment of the loan would lapse. By midnight of the 30th of December, 2019, Mr Jacob's repayment window would be closed.

Should the loan repayment be delayed passed the 30th of December, the Utopia Empire would have the irrefutable claim over a portion of Kimberland, in accordance with the terms of contract.

But then, Jimi Jacobs was in full control of his game already.

He was an economist dead sure of himself. Especially when it came to making use of borrowed fund to yield returns before any repayment deadline.

But then, the ever so clever devil was never resting, too. Dr Oye was dead sure no one can beat him in his own type of game.

Especially with the full backing of the real devil up there. The dark, monstrous Utopia.

For no man has dined with the Devil – even with a long, long spoon – and ever judged himself cleverer than him, after the fateful dinner!

It had been about a year, too, since Dr Oye resumed his appointment as Special Adviser to President Jimi Jacobs.

The fifty-seven-year-old evil genius hadn't rendered any official advice to the president since.

The old man had all along busied himself looking into files and documents, to know where exactly to hammer his subversive nail.

Oye could tell from Jimi Jacob's attitude that the forty-seven-year-old President of Kimberland wouldn't care to take his advice.

Oye could tell that his own office was only meant to be silent and relegated to the very background. He knew this well. But the old man had become even more determined to have his way regardless.

In the past year, President Jacobs had embarked fully on fulfilling his dreams.

He'd made the young Professor Ojo more of a right hand and the young professor had helped in the president's economic restructuring.

One of Jimi's dream was to replace the old rail system in the country with the subway system.

But then, being a versed economist himself and being fully aware of the debt at hand, the president began executing the subway project in a systemically productive way.

He decided to first execute the construction of the subway that could generate a high internal revenue within a short period of time.

The railway connecting Mountana in the North, Kakakhi in the West and Gardon at the Centre, were the most commuted railway in the country.

Professor Ojo had done thorough analyses of the revenues the existing railway system generated daily, monthly and annually.

He could thereby predict how much revenue could be generated from the supersonic, more efficient and ultramodern subway system connecting the mega cities.

China was known for speed in executing construction projects. The country's hi-tech technologies could construct giant structures in about six days.

The Kimberland President decided to invite a civil engineering group of companies from China to take on the subway installation megaproject with a jet age speed.

Another project Jimi thought of executing was the installation of a constant electricity.

Kimberland was sharing the same dam with South Africa and Cape Town. And the fifty-four million populated neighbouring Kimberland could only generate 2000 kilowatts.

President Jacobs knew citizens were ready to pay for a constant supply of electricity, if only it was available.

So, with the many waterfalls in Kimberland, Jimi decided to make a huge power generating dam.

He evacuated a small valley village in the Eastern Province called Barama and moved them to the neighbouring Sarfal District.

He followed the example of China's electricity installation and flooded the small Barama Village.

From the entire flooded Barama Village, he built a huge dam to power the nation's electricity.

Even yet, the president feared not being able to pay off the debt to Utopia at the stipulated time.

He feared the internal investments may not have yielded enough to have the loan paid back already by December 30, 2019.

And so, he decided to search through the country for other money minting sources.

Professor Ojo got skilled researchers who had recently made discoveries on making diesel from soy beans, the most staple crop in the country

Jimi Jacobs' administration went ahead to commercialise the innovation and turned Kimberland's soy beans produce into a national treasure.

Kimberland's soy beans soon became gold; and its farms some glided, precious wealth mines.

The middle aged president immediately partnered with some foreign investors and an automobile manufacturing company to establish its factory in Kimberland. The manufacturer would make just vehicles running on diesel.

President J. J. won the applause of millions of Kimberians with his several innovative projects. He became the people's man through and through.

Jimi's achievement soon hushed the opposition parties entirely. The speed at which the middle aged man executed his monstrous projects didn't permit a debate.

President J. J. was soon nicknamed 'the Bullet President.'

For Kimberians said he was as fast and supersonic as the bullet shot.



Jimi Jacobs became the people's man. But then, the forty-seven-year-old wasn't his own man anymore.

The once clear, bright pair of eyes had become bloodshot. Like that of a sole survivor in a bloody battle.

It was like a race against the wind. Jimi's sole ambition was to repay the loan he got from Utopia. There was no peace or fulfillment. No rest or satisfaction.

Only a mad race against a fast ticking time bomb countdown.

The poor man had become a machine without a soul. He only lived to escape Utopia's looming grab on his territory.

If he didn't get to pay back the loan, soon his great works would be submerged by a greater evil – when the people who had praised him until now realised he'd traded a large portion of his country to a lending organisation.

And that was what Utopia had made of Jimi Jacobs.

Jimi had numerous nightmares and sleepless nights. The once cheerful man had become a

shadow of himself. His signatory charming smile had disappeared into a dark, serious demeanour.

The middle aged man would pace around in the flower garden within the Presidential Villa at the Rock Castle.

Sometimes, he would wake up in the dead of the night and read through hundreds of documents and files.

And some other times, he would calculate on rough papers for hours.

His many words gradually reduced into just a few. And he soon drifted away from everyone that seemed to reflect either his outward or inner self.

But when it came to state affairs and projects, he was a robot; and no one could find anything amiss. Except if it had to do with his real, private self.

Demi knew something was gravely amiss with her husband; but Jimi wouldn't open up the gore within his soul to his wife.

Only Jimi knew the storm of worries beating against his heart. The storm he had chosen to harbour deep within.

But Demi knew there was a problem regardless. The once romantic man she used to know had drifted so far away. And not even her tears could bring him any closer.

The forty-two-year-old woman wouldn't understand why her loving husband would change so much in little time.

Why the man the nation loves so much wouldn't love himself back enough to express himself.

The first lady was frustrated already.

All the same, she had to rescue her good husband from whatever he was going through.



Despite Oye's race to make himself relevant in Jimi Jacob's administration, the old economist hadn't yet found a way to ascend the stairs in the pyramids of power.

He had read through countless documents. He had even predicted failure on some larger than life projects the president had embarked on.

But none of his scheme has amounted to something. Every of his plans in the past one year had come to naught.

The thirst for power had led Oye to join Utopia pyramidal structure many years ago.

The way of climbing up the pyramid at the multinational organisation was for a member – called ‘Agent’ – to carry out larger than life tasks.

One of the tasks was to systemically channel a nation’s fund into the organisation; and which Oye had been doing in the past years as the minister of finance and economy.

The task that could earn an Agent a five gold star at once and consequently a seven step-lift up the Utopian pyramid, was for the Agent to actualise a really grand scheme.

A scheme that brings a nation’s entire economy under Utopia.

And Oye was now in the process of getting himself a spot at the MVP tier of the pyramid.

The old man knew how uptight the president had been with the country's finance. He reasoned that if he continued to look into papers and document, he might not find anything eventually.

It was just a year to the expiration of the debt and with the pace at which the president was going, the repayment of the loan could be possible.

Oye knew he had little time. And it was time for him to look beyond the papers.

The fifty-seven-year-old had been sitting in his office for a while thinking of what his next line of action would be.

He was tired of doing the same thing daily with no result.

After a long thought, the old man muttered to himself. 'I will have to make the crack if I can't find one.'

He picked up his phone and booked a flight ticket.

He was travelling out of the country.

Chapter 17

THE Kakakhi Artificial Nature's Park was a sight to behold when it was open in December 2018.

Teo had emptied his brains on the execution of the project. While he had worked hard on the park's structural design, he'd worked even harder to bring the design to life.

The brilliant architect had supervised the construction from beginning to end.

Now Teo had got his long held dream realised. His dream of placing his city among Kimberland's tourist destinations.

And the young man's architectural firm had become widely known and reputable.



December 2018 was a fresh breath for Mia. And the beginning of a brand new life.

After the opening of the Kakakhi park, the young woman had to do another interview with Teo as the architect and supervisor of the project.

Mia had a pretty strong disagreement with Teo during the interview. It was a tense argument for Mia while Teo found it a talk to enlighten.

Every time Mia asked an interview question, the successful, young architect started his response with the words, 'I give thanks to God.'

Mia found it so off for a TV interview. She reasoned the young man was sounding too religious and spoiling the professionalism she expected.

So, she challenged Teo to be professional.

‘Sir, can you be more real, more you... more professional. Instead of saying the religious cliché that only sounds pretentious.

‘It’s an interview to be broadcasted to millions of Kimberians, for crying out loud,’ she said.

Teo laughed a moment. ‘I think we need to talk, Miss Mia,’ he said.

‘Uh-huh,’ Mia retorted, ‘I’m listening to your explanation, Mr Teo.’

Teo sat up. ‘Do you think I’ve been faking giving my praises to God, Miss Mia?’

‘I understand your work as a reporter and I know interesting stuff and controversies sell more. But I don’t think I should explain to you if this is just me or I’m faking it.’

Teo wasn't going to stop there and Foye knew it. She had come around to give her man a boost.

Foye tried to calm Teo at first. But when she saw he wasn't angry, the young woman sat back and enjoyed the conversation.

Teo paused a moment, searching Mia's agitated eyes. And then, he went on in a bit.

'I know that's not your main point,' he said. 'Your real issue isn't whether I'm faking being religious or not.

'The real problem is that you don't believe I got the contract solely because God helped me. God made me win and still you don't believe that's exactly the case.'

Teo leaned forward and looked into Mia's eyes.

He finished his words.

'Basically, you still feel somewhere in you that God is some sort of fiction, Miss Mia! You haven't ever experienced Him like several many of us have!'

Mia was short of words. It seemed the young man nailed it. Mia wasn't expecting the man to engage her in that sort of a discussion.

She wasn't prepared for this but she had to put up a tussle. She wouldn't just accept defeat with that rude dude of a year back.

She had what to counter Teo with at that instant.



The first family of Kimberland had eventually got to meet with Jimi's love child.

A DNA test had confirmed that the young man was an offspring of President Jimi Jacobs.

To avoid the preying eyes of the press, Demi and Jimi had told the young man about the orphanages and made it their place of meeting.

When the couple usually went to the orphanage to meet with the young man and their other children, Jimi would make out time to spend with his biological son.

But after meeting with his son about a few times, the Kimberland president couldn't find time anymore.

Only Demi began meeting Jimi Jacobs Junior.

When the president stopped making the meeting appointments with his son, Jimi Junior soon stopped coming around, too.

The young man had become a little awkward with the first lady.

And since he'd earlier assured the first family that his intention wasn't to disrupt the couple's home, he stopped making the appointments altogether.

And he tried to explain his situation to the first lady.

Although Demi wouldn't mind meeting with the young man without her husband, she didn't object to Jimi Junior's idea.

She'd thought if the young man was awkward with her, then she should simply let things be.



Mia gathered up courage and spoke back at Teo.

‘What has my belief got to do with the interview. You repeating the same statement over and again was already becoming boring and monotonous. And, of course, it would reduce the...’

‘Viewers ratings,’ Teo interposed with a quiet voice. ‘It’s not just a mere statement. It’s the whole of me. It is what I am... It is my very testimony.’

Mia looked on a moment and chuckled. She had never met a man like this; she found him ridiculous outright.

Teo paused awhile and then resumed.

‘I think I’d be wasting my time explaining the weight of the statement rather than explaining the miracle that gave birth to it.’

Teo sat up. ‘Miss Mia, the Director of Stone and Mortar has never lost a bid—not to talk of a mere contest. Take that as one count.

‘Again, all the entire panel of judges to decide the winner were all his acquaintances. Make it two.

‘I knew my presentation and idea was innovative. But after my presentation that day, the look on the Stone and Mortar man’s face affirmed that we the other contestants were merely wasting our time. Make that three.

‘And why wouldn’t he look at like that. It is simply obvious and expected that this little kid in front of you is a novice; and which, of course, I am. And that’s four.

‘But, you know, I cried to God for help. And the miracle at the City Hall happened. Something that has never happened for as long we can all remember!

‘The mayor decided the audience should vote for their winners. That should’ve been a good news for me, right?’

Teo paused for a moment; and Mia was as attentive as a little child. Foye was surprised at the length her quiet man would go to explain the power of God.

Teo went on with a calm, composed speak.

‘But I was there with only my girlfriend and my secretary. Just imagine; I was there with only Foye and Tim. Just the three of us in the midst of two thousand strangers!

‘And then, without any word of campaign or advert, the people voted for me!

‘People that were only getting to know me within the project window. People that must’ve heard of me only then or a few weeks before on the TV.’

Teo leaned fully back in his seat. ‘Now tell me, was that what I can get to happen by myself?’

The young architect paused for a moment; and Mia heaved a thoughtful sigh.

Teo continued. ‘You’ve been to many architectural firms that participated in the bidding contest.

‘Now compare their companies to mine having only four staff members. Should such an award winning design come out from this budding firm?

‘It’s Jesus Christ. It’s God all the way!’

Mia was humbled. She was as still as a steel bar. Every word Teo uttered had sunk deep into the waters of her heart.

She began to see the contest from a new perspective. She decided to postpone the interview. She wanted to ruminate on Teo’s words.

Teo didn’t let the young reporter leave without handing her a Bible.

‘Have it for yourself, Miss Mia; and start with reading the Book of John to have a clearer perspective about the Truth.’

Mia studied the Gospel Book of John at home.

Before she had finished reading through, she'd perfectly understood why she needed to commit her life to God through His Son and Saviour of the sinful world, Jesus Christ.

Mia turned her life over to Jesus Christ and had a fresh new life.

Like an athlete in a pool, the young woman learnt to keep her head above the waters to breathe and her body in the waters to swim.

Mia's flower had learnt to bloom within the thorns of the world. And fly against the storms like the eagle in the clouds. The young woman had stopped picking up her mother's bullying calls.

She wasn't fighting her mother. She only wanted to be happy and maintain her sanity.

Mia also found peace of mind in her place of work. And her newly found salvation erased the dark shade that had hovered over her.

She found an embrace and succour in Jesus Christ.

And rather than bury her mind in excessive work and films as an escape route out of her worries, the young woman now often submerged her spirit in praises.

Mia would sing along worship tracks in her bedroom when she was depressed.

And she wouldn't know when her spirit would be lifted to the point that she could dance herself to sweat, turning over to high praises.

It was the drug she needed to keep herself high. Surrounding herself with God's lively presence through an atmosphere of worship and praise.

The young woman still worked hard and watched lots of films. But then, they no longer served as the handkerchiefs to wipe her tears anymore.

Not anymore.

Chapter 18

IT was Christmas 2018 and Kimberland was in a festive mood.

On Boxing Day, the small tourist nation received an unexpected gift.

Dr Oye was back already from his private impromptu trip abroad. And the day after

Christmas, Kimberland was announced as the host for the 2019 Olympic Games.

A gift the tourist nation herself never requested nor applied for.

President Jimi Jacobs was dazed. He didn't bid to host the games. Games and sports were the least things on his mind.

And now, the world had decided to flood the small nation the following year for the ever grand Olympic Games.

Jimi wasn't sure of what to do.

The offer to host the Olympics appeared too good to turn down. Yet, at one and the same time, the offer didn't seem right. For Kimberland didn't bid for it.

The issue was becoming rather too complicated for the president to handle. Jimi was indeed pressured.

Kimberians already thought it was the doing of their beloved president. Mr Jacob's approval ratings had therefore improved.

Praises of President J. J. were on the lips of Kimberians at each and every gathering in the country.

How could Jimi Jacobs ever turn down the offer with all of these? Everything had pressured the Kimberland president to accept the decision of the host selection committee.

Jimi decided to call up Oye to seek his advice.

It was the first time the new Special Adviser to the President would be summoned to perform his official duty since he resumed his position a year earlier.

Dr Oye knew why he had been summoned by president just then; and he knew exactly what to do.

In the company of an aide who was requested to bring him, the fifty-seven-year-old mounted up the stairs from the basement to the third floor and walked through the long passage.

On reaching the president's office, the aide ushered the old man in.

President Jacobs welcomed Oye and pitched a question straight away, as though it hadn't been a while since he had a meeting with the older man.

'Tell me, Dr Oye,' Jimi said; 'what d' you think of the Olympics?'

Oye took a deep breath before he replied.

'The Olympics itself is a good thing,' he said; 'but we hosting the prestigious games is what I'm not sure is good, my President.'

The glint of interest in Jimi's face disappeared just as soon as Oye spewed out his response.

The president wasn't expecting that kind of answer from the old man.

He had thought keeping Oye in the basement in the past year would make him become so desperate about pleasing him. And Oye knew this quite well.

Yet here was the old man telling the president what he wouldn't like to hear.

Jimi wondered why his Special Adviser would be against the Olympics coming to Africa's Kimberland at all.

The president looked askance; glaring at his adviser. But he wanted to hear more; he wanted to know Oye's particular reason.

He motioned for the man to speak on.

Dr Oye sat up. 'I guess you should think beyond the Olympics, my President.

'Your approval ratings may have increased. And it's true it's going to be the first time Kimberland will be given a worldwide attention since our independence almost a hundred years ago.

'It's also true Kimberland hosting the Olympics will make the second time the prestigious games event will be coming to Africa – after South Africa hosted it.

'And I know quite well, too, that the mere fact that the landmark event gets to take place in your administration can etch your name in Kimberland's Book of Heroes...'

Everything got at Jimi with an exponential effect. His dream had always been to have his name etched in the sands of time as the best leader Africa had ever known.

Jimi was agitated. ‘If you know all these,’ he interposed, ‘then, why are you dissuading us from hosting the Olympics, huh?’

Oye retorted. ‘It’s the weather, my President.’

Jimi couldn’t believe his ears. ‘Weather!’ he gasped. ‘You’re saying you’re objecting to us hosting the prestigious Olympics Games because of weather? I mean... *Weather!*’

Jimi’s glare was absolutely askance. ‘You know, you have to come clearer for me to really get you, Dr Oye!’

Oye went on with a calm. ‘Yes, it’s because of the weather, my President. You know the Olympics is scheduled for September through October next year 2019.’

‘It’s the latter months of the raining season in sub-Saharan Africa then. And September rains are usually the heaviest in Kimberland, you know.

‘We may not really have a good weather during the Olympics. Plus, the fact that we probably are still not economically buoyant enough to host Olympics.’

Jimi still couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

He’d always known the old man wasn’t a true friend of his administration.

But then, he couldn’t believe Oye would stoop so low, to the extent of making a lame weather excuse to discourage him from hosting the Olympics.

And only because of his dislike for him.

Oye’s discouraging excuse only made Jimi more determined to host the Olympics. He was resolute to do just what the old enemy had asked him to not do.

Jimi wasn't too surprised at Oye's negative response anyway. It was game for the president, in fact.

The Kimberland president had thought he was on top of his games. Jimi had taken Oye as a representation of his enemy and the country's.

He'd wanted to know Oye's mind on the Olympics so he could do just the opposite. And that was why he beckoned on the old snake for a talk in the first place.

He'd never still realised that the old serpent was no friend one can play games with.

For if the first woman had realised this in the Eden Garden, she would have avoided the foe like a bag of plague.



Oye was reclined in his seat in his own office.

He had given Jimi an offer he wouldn't refuse.

Oye knew his opinion didn't matter to the Kimberland president. He knew if he had supported hosting the Olympics, Jimi wouldn't host it.

And if he was against hosting the Olympics, the president would definitely host it.

He knew all he had to do to get Jimi to do his bidding was to say the opposite. He could even get him to walk into a fire.

Jimi was caught in the trap he himself had set for Oye.

What was needed to complete Oye's scheme now was for the president to do the opposite of what the old man suggested. For the president to choose to host the Olympics.

But he knew the final blow can't be given without Jimi's permission.

His own wish to enslave Jimi's Kimberland couldn't be fulfilled without Jimi allowing him.

Oye could only hope Jimi would accept to host the Olympics now.

The old man had made a trip outside the country a few weeks back. The sole goal of the fifty-seven-year-old was to find a way of stopping Jimi from paying back the Utopian loan.

He had secure the Olympic Games for Kimberland at the die minute of the host selection committee's decision window.

The powerful strings of influence were pulled by Utopia itself. To aid Oye's machination in Kimberland.

And for Utopia's ultimate goal of conquest and dominance.

Thirteen years earlier, while Oye was still the minister of finance and economy, the president of the time had assigned in him with looking for mineral resources.

Oye had organised a large team of geologists to look into the ground across the country for untapped resources.

The team had found clusters of diamond ore that time.

But then, Oye dissolved the research team the instant the report was made to him. He paid the researchers a handsome reward and got them to sign an oath of secrecy.

The researchers didn't hesitate to follow the then minister's orders since they already assumed it was coming from the government.

Oye kept the information to himself and reported back to the then president that the research team couldn't find anything.

No one knew about the case other than the researchers and Dr Oye. And Oye's main motive was to own the city of diamonds.

And that city with priceless wealth lying hidden and untapped beneath its rocky hills...

That blessed, prosperous city was Mountana.

Oye knew he could not just do what a nation's government does.

He needed power.

And if he would achieve such grand machinations and conspiracy, he needed backup from an incredibly powerful international body.

And that had led him to Utopia.

When Oye would eventually become an MVP Agent the moment he handed Kimberland's Mountana to Utopia, the old man would be made Utopia's Principality for the Kimberland Colony.

He would oversee the industrial mining of diamonds and the exportation.

From the sacked and rebuilt Mountana, the Utopia Empire would control Kimberland's already enslaved economy, as well as the politics.

The Rock Castle in the capital Gardon City would sooner pass for a figurehead.

And the office of the Principality of the conquered nation in Mountana would wield absolute authority on behalf of Utopia.

He just needed the president to not reject the Olympics Games.

And he could predict that the fund saved up to repay the loan a year from then would be lavished on the Olympics. Making repayment before deadline difficult.

And then, he would simply own glittering wealth and power.

Oye swivelled himself around with an excited glee and burst into a fit of laughter.

But then, in his excitement the old man had quickly forgotten something.

That President J. J. was a competent economist, too.

Chapter 19

JIMI Jacob's approval ratings had increased since Kimberland was announced as the host nation for the 2019 Olympics Games.

Jimi wanted more. He wanted to win the next election and have a second term.

And accepting to host the Olympics there and then seemed to be the ticket to getting that gallant re-entry into the Rock Castle in 2021.

But it was December 2018 already; and the Utopian loan he was aiming to repay in a year from then wouldn't allow him to freely do his will.

The forty-seven-year-old economist decided to do some calculations. He desired to chase the two mice and take enough care to not lose any.

Kimberians were eager to hear the announcement of Kimberland hosting the Olympics from the Rock Castle itself.

They wanted the good news confirmed by their own President J. J.

The secretaries, public relation officers and aides at the Rock castle were also waiting on Jimi Jacobs to hear his administration's stance.

And Jimi was waiting on the economic analysis before him for the answer.

The Olympics would consume a whole lot of money and Jimi knew this.

He would have to renovate and upgrade the stadiums in the country to international standards, among many other things.

The problem wasn't that Jimi wouldn't be able to pay off Utopia debt. Rather, it was the sheer fact that he might not be able to meet up with the deadline.

If only the financial organisation could extend the repayment window beyond the 30th of December, 2019.

After an hour of brainstorming and calculations, an idea struck Jimi's mind. It was about industrial tax.

The tax levy seemed to be the only way the president could think of to pay off the debt to Utopia.

When the Olympic was on, people from all nations around the world would troop into Kimberland. Consequently, businesses would have a high sale rise.

With the tremendous increase in business profit, his administration would be able to garner equally higher tax revenues.

And with the high tax revenues, the Kimberland president would get back much of the money his administration would spend on the Olympics.

And then, he could balance up the savings he'd made and pay off the Utopia debt.

Jimi knew the idea didn't have a hundred percent reliability.

But that was the most practical thing he could come up with. If he had to host the Olympics and equally pay back the debt before deadline.

Jimi went through files in his laptop for a while and jotted down some things.

Ever since his ordeal with Utopia began, the forty-seven-year-old economist had become weary of handing over his concerns to people to take care of.

He thought if he had handled the budget problem himself, perhaps he would have found a better way to carry out his huge projects; without having to get a loan from Utopia.

Jimi got to know Utopia even better after signing the deal. He made some findings and learnt about a country in Asia whose economy was paralysed by the organisation.

But then, it was too late for Jimi to back out. He'd already signed a contract with the fearsome Utopia.

Jimi couldn't imagine how Oye got to know the financial cum political group. He knew now there was a bigger conspiracy he hadn't realised all along.

He decided to stop trusting people altogether.

Jimi remembered his wife's earlier suspicions about the old man but the president was too ashamed to go to his first lady and explain his situation.

The president made a rough estimate of the tax revenue rates per week during the Olympics.

And after about an hour of intensive calculations, Jimi got up and stretched himself.

He had come to a decision.

He would host the Olympics.



Kimberland eventually hosted the Olympics in the months of September through October 2019.

The tourist Southern African country was fully prepared for the heavy rain of people from every part of the world.

The whole world's attention was fixed on Kimberland. And several many September flights had been fully booked by all lovers of sports from the world over.

Hotels in big cities as well as small districts in Kimberlands were all preparing for bumper, record breaking sales.

The cities and districts sparkled in colourful lights at night.

Every nook and cranny of the country spelt out 'Welcome to Kimberland.'

Kimberland was prepared for a heavy rain of people flooding in. But what they were less prepared for in those two months was heaven's downpour and flood.

It was the tropical September rains and the year's late rains were with a difference.

It rained heavily all around the country. And only with brief respite of sparse showers; or else a light, rainbowed sunshine.

The rains would only pause for a few hours in a day. They were incessant and endless, with no breathing space for the drenched earth.

The heavy downpour soon led to floods. And neither drainages nor barricades could control their forceful waves.

The flood rendered people homeless and businesses were soon handicapped.

With the focus of the world on Kimberland, news of the heavy rains and flood was soon caught on the international scene.

Meteorological predictions on weather forecasts suggested that the heavy tropical rains would continue for quite a while.

It didn't take long before several many Kimberland-bound travellers cancelled their flights.

Many would-be visitors for the Olympics soon began to choose to watch the games broadcast on TV instead.

Kimberland-bound flights were delayed in the first week of September; and began to be diverted to South Africa's Johannesburg when the stalling couldn't just be put up anymore.

The event was a total fail for businesses in Kimberland. And consequently for the first citizen of the host country, who had wound his last strand of hope around it.

Every money Jimi Jacob's administration had invested in the prestigious gaming event had gone down the drain without a single gain.

He'd even lost some savings that were for the Utopian debt.

Jimi was downer than ever. What he'd always feared most was happening right before his eyes. And there was nothing he could do to stop it.

He remembered Dr Oye had talked about the bad weather when advising him to not host the Olympics.

And just then, Jimi knew the old man's good advice was even a trap.

It was for the calculative president to do just the opposite of the advice.

He regretted having the talk in the first place.

He regretted even having the devil in his cargo.

Chapter 20

IT was Friday, the 27th of December, in the year 2019.

Teo was ready to propose marriage to Foye.

The young, successful architect had bought a few plots of land in the bustling Kakakhi City since he started trotting the paths of financial success.

Teo had completed building his own house. The type he believed Foye would love to live in.

The young man's plan was to build his house first and then propose a lovely walk together into the future to the beautiful, elegant Foye.

Now that Teo had just completed his house, the New Year eve was meant to be the gentleman's big day.

He had put everything together for the beautiful weekend he'd been waiting for since ages.

Unaware of Teo's plans, Foye had something else slated for the weekend up until the New Year.

She was going to spend the last days of the year until the second day of the New Year at Open Arms Orphanage.

The young woman had come to bid Teo goodbye before she embarked on her journey.

Open Arms Orphanage in Mountana City was where Foye was raised.

Now she couldn't understand why Teo would raise an eyebrow over the fact that she was going to spend the New Year eve with her core family.

Foye had spent the early years of her life in the orphanage at Mountana.

And after her secondary school education, Foye had left the orphanage to live an independent life with the help of the matron.

She came to Kakakhi to pursue a degree. The orphanage paid her tuition fees in Kakakhi while she took care of her everyday needs.

It was in the process of fending for herself that the young lady came to start her fast successful business.

The orphanage was Foye's home and the orphans her only family.

The young, beautiful was upset now. Her silence was loud enough to spell out her anger.

The fire of argument between Teo and Foye had been on for about ten minutes. Surprisingly,

Teo was the first to emit the flame of anger that afternoon.

Teo became upset at Foye's sudden plans that might handicap his big surprise package.

He didn't want his girlfriend to go on the trip. But then, he couldn't tell his lady his own plans. The young man had to make up a lot of excuses to mask his real reason.

Teo wasn't ready to let go of his woman. And Foye wasn't ready to take it either.

Foye stopped short. 'Tell me, Teo, are you by any chance looking down on my background?' she quipped.

She paused a second. 'What am I even asking? It's not like there's something to look down on. My family is the richest and largest of its kind in Kimberland!'

Teo couldn't help but laugh aloud. It was Foye's habit to boast of the size of the orphanage where she was raised.

When Foye usually made a reference to the size of her family, Teo would laugh.

The young man found it funny that someone in the 21st century would boast of a family's size as if it was a trophy.

Teo could smile now. 'Thank God you know there's nothing to look down on, Foye,' he said. 'I just want you to pay more attention to me like you pay to your large family.'

Teo took a few steps towards the young woman. 'You call your siblings every other day,' he continued. 'And I know I've been busier with work these few years.'

'But now, I want us to spend time together into the New Year.'

Foye retorted. 'Well, thank God you realise your work has kept us apart. Let's have the vacation when I come back from Mountana. Prepare a large feast for your queen!'

Foye backed the frustrated young man, retreated a few steps and halted.

She turned around; wrapped one of her left arm around her belly, pinned her right elbow on it and tapped her chin with her forefinger.

‘I’ve pardoned you but I won’t declare you not guilty. Not until you apologise here and now for laughing at the size of my family.’

‘Okay,’ Teo smiled. He braced himself up for the formal apology.

He went on with an earnest, repentant tone of voice.

‘Your honour, I do hereby apologise for laughing at the big size of the largest family in Kimberland!’

Foye laughed.

Teo smiled and his voice took on a softer, calmer tone. ‘But honestly, I’m sorry, dear.’

Foye smiled. ‘Thou art forgiven, son of man.’

Teo chuckled. He squinted at Foye. ‘I think I should meet with your family, too. Let’s travel to Mountana together.’

Foye gasped. ‘Really?!’

‘Of course yes. I will need to ask them for your hand in marriage eventually. I’m going to be a part of your large family soon, you know.’

Foye nodded at him and smiled.



As the fated midnight of 30th December approached with the speed of a galloping horse, the president thought to spend the last few days of 2019 with his family.

His wife, his adopted children in Gardon City and his new found biological son.

President Jimi Jacobs knew he wouldn’t be able to pay back the Utopian loan by the 30th of December and he might have to lose a portion of Kimberland to Utopia.

His heart was flown about in the winds of worry. He wanted to be with his family through the brewing storm and find sufficient solace in their company.

Rather than for the purpose of festive celebrations, he wanted to spend time with his family to get through the enormous stress and tension.

President Jacobs called Jimi Junior on phone so he could join the whole family at one of the orphanages in Gardon. For the weekend and through the New Year festivities.

But the young man would not be making it. He told his father the President that he had plans through that period in the city of Mountana.

President Jacobs cancelled his entire vacation plan with his family altogether.

He thought he had to wade through these storms alone. Without family or people.

But he was wrong on this one, at least.

Chapter 21

IT was the evening of the 29th of December, 2019.

The eve of the deadline for repaying the Utopia loan. It was the night President Jimi Jacobs had feared.

The night of 29th of December was the furthest period of grace for the president of Kimberland to repay the debt to Utopia.

And once it was the midnight of the 30th, Utopia would have all the rights to own a part of Kimberland. According to the terms of the loan contract.

It was well past eight that Sunday evening. Jimi was home at the Rock Castle's Presidential Villa.

The president was immersed in deep thought and in several imaginations of possible consequences ahead.

He had called Utopia's CEO in the morning to beg for an extension of the repayment window. But Devlyn McCathy had insisted that the signed terms of the loan contract were never going to change.

Jimi paced about the same point in the Villa. He'd been glancing at his phone for calls and email notifications since morning.

He hoped to hear that Utopia had reconsidered. But nothing seemed forthcoming.

Jimi decided he would travel to the Utopia headquarters in the United Kingdom first thing the next morning. He was going to earnestly appeal to them to reconsider.

But then, tomorrow was too late already.

Jimi didn't know that while he waited on Utopia's call throughout today, the Utopia Empire was waiting for the clock to strike midnight.

So they could strike... when the iron was hot.



It was past midnight in Kimberland on the fateful 30th of December, 2019.

While Kimberland's Mountana – the soon-to-be city of great diamond mines – while the mountainous blooming city lay quiet and fast asleep, a horrific disaster swept in with the speed of a raging storm.

A massive fleet of black air force helicopters swooped into the city skies; tearing through the winds with their huge, fast rolling blades.

And before the chatter of the flying machines could wake the city from its slumber, several powerful bombs were dropped across the face of the sleeping city.

Billows of dark fumes and flames enveloped the entirety of Mountana like wildfire.

Both skyscrapers and bungalows, billboards and signposts – every little thing came down shattering into hot ruins and debris.

Only the mountains, hills and waterfalls remain and stood out of the burning remains.

The whole city of 800,000 people was soon buried under thick dark, fumes of a a massive bomb blast.

And before cockcrow when people wake from sleep, the once lively Mountana City was turned to a burning grave.

None of the residents of the beautiful city of hills and waterfalls lived to tell the story.



Kimberians woke up to news of the mass loss of lives in Mountana and they were absolutely shocked and confused.

By the morning, big international news channels reported that the mountainous city of the 2019 Olympic host nation was hit by a volcanic eruption.

Kimberland's news media soon tolled along the theory in their news content. And the theory of a volcanic eruption soon turned to a popular opinion in the country.

Kimberland mourned.



It was the 1st of January, 2020.

A presidential airbus – a giant, sleek-bodied transport helicopter, and with a twenty-two-man

carriage – swooped towards the huge, vast crematorium.

At the outskirts of Kimberland’s Mountana City.

A host of thousands of citizens lifted their solemn gazes as the President’s aircraft hovered in the far distance.

The standing multitude was clad in black clothes, with each person wearing a sanitary mask over their nose in the lingering overnight haze.

The hilly city of Mountana in the far distance was itself dense with several huge billows of fume. And they were the telltale of the tragedy that hit the entire city two days earlier.

Precisely the 30th of December, 2019.

The presidential helicopter soon landed at a distance.

A swarm of pressmen advanced with a surge towards the direction, with camera shutters clipping on the President’s arrival.

A set of government aides began trooping out of the helicopter, their boots thumping a heavy thud into the ground as they jumped down.

President J. J. stepped down from the helicopter; his eyes sunken and fatigued.

A podium had been erected in front of the crematorium, where he'd give a speech mourning the national tragedy.

He strode towards the podium, with his aides trotting behind and around him.

A personal aide rushed up to him and handed him a sanitary mask, while curtsying with a reverent bow.

Jimi halted and glanced at the sanitary mask in his hand a second. He shook his head and thrust the mask back into the giver's hand.

The aide was taken aback. Why would the President not want to use the sanitary mask he just handed him?

The presidential aide started at the middle aged man, fearing he was the one at fault. ‘Your Excellency, sir...!’

Jimi raised a hand to still him and signal he was just fine without the mask. The aide only quivered nervously, his fingers fumbling with the piece.

Cameras shutters severally clipped the moment the President refused the safety mask, as the pressmen advanced in a gallop.

The President raised his weary gaze at the advancing pressmen.

He turned his head and took a long look. There at a distance were the coffins of few bodies deliberately brought out of the crematorium to signify the funeral.

He could see vast, endless photos of the victims. Faces of people that were some seventy-two hours ago living residents of the lively city of Montana.

And a gasp of whimper escaped the president’s quivery lips.

The middle aged man picked himself up in a jiffy and trudged towards the funeral, where the poor souls laid.

The advancing pressmen turned towards the direction the president trotted and hurried along.

Jimi got to the funeral ground and there they were—the symbol of a whole city of eight hundred thousand souls lying as dead as a cold lump of stone.

He just stood still.

To the pressmen and the gathered nation, the sight of the frozen first citizen was best described as the unconscious freeze after a bullet hit at the heart.

Just before the inevitable collapse that always follows.

Time stopped to count that instant and everybody stood absolutely rooted to the ground.

President Jimi Jacobs crumbled down to his knees. Right before the frozen eyes of the entire nation.

He cried. It was like the deafening shriek of a spanked little girl.

The entire crowd was moved. Some began yanking off their sanitary masks and throwing them to the ground in the height of emotion.

And pressmen captured every detail of the momentous drama and televised it live.

All that Kimberians expected from their president was for him to mount the podium and give a formal speech.

But President J. J.'s humanity had surpassed norms and expected standards a thousand times.

Viewers at home shed a tear while they watched the live telecast.

Newspapers sold all prints through the week within the first two hours of daylight.

And news blogs recorded a high traffic flood, some having their webservers crashed on the first day.

It was the top story on newspapers and on broadcasts in Kimberland throughout that week.

When, moreover, the international community caught up with the news, debates on whether Mr Jacobs deserved to be nominated for the year's Nobel Peace Prize filled the Internet.

Soon, almost everyone clamoured that Jimi Jacobs should vie for the presidential seat again, at the end of his first term in 2021. Volunteers also set up campaigns and programs for him for a rerun.

The gorgeous middle aged President J. J. joined the league of Kimberland's heroes in the heart of citizens that day.

But then, not in the heart of losers who had got nothing more to lose.

Those that would unearth even hades beneath the world.

Chapter 22

THERE were huge billows of fume rising in President Jimi Jacob's heart.

But the fume was not of anger or rage. The fume billows were rather of sorrows that wouldn't be doused with many streams of tears.

Kimberland's Mountana City was dead. The prosperous tourist destination was gone – and

entirely buried in both bomb blast flames and cremating inferno.

World leaders sent their condolences to the tourist Southern African country. Solemn sermons were rendered by clergymen in commemoration of the victims of the tragedy.

Mourning candles were lit and carried in a solemn march as an act of remembrance for the departed souls of the 30th December tragedy.

And gloomy time slowly rode out its chariot. But the president wouldn't just be comforted.

Kimberland had lost Mountana City. But Jimi Jacobs had lost both a city and a newfound son.

The President had been trying to reach his one and only son on phone since after the tragic incident; but the line hadn't gone through for a moment.

Jimi Jacobs Junior had informed his father the President that he was spending the last few days of December 2019 until the New Year in Mountana City.

And that had been within period of the tragedy.

The president was sad and shattered. He couldn't hold back his emotion on the day of the mass burial. He cried like a little kid.

For he'd never had a son with the first lady for more than twenty years already.

Together with the first lady, he had adopted two orphanages in the capital Gardon City. All because of his unquenchable desire to have someone he may call his child.

IVF and surrogacy hadn't been successful to get the loving couple their own children over the years, too. And it appeared as though prayers were not being answered.

Well, not until he got a letter from a son he never knew existed.

A son from the teenage fling with his high school sweetheart and first love. Ninna Robinson.

A son he never knew existed. Jimi Jacobs Junior.

Now that the president lost his newfound son, he would mourn him for a lifetime.



Teo Jimi Jacobs had planned to travel with Foye his woman to Mountana, and spend the last few days of December 2019 through the New Year festivities with her in that city.

The young architect Teo J. Jacobs was President Jimi Jacob's newfound son; and he had always liked to be called by his first name Teo.

President Jimi Jacobs had used the occasion of Teo emerging as the winner of architectural bidding contest to organise a Presidential dinner with him so he could meet with his son.

Done under the guise of the president dining with the winner of the bidding contest for the Kakakhi Park, the sneaky eyes of the media covering the public sessions couldn't see through the charade.

The first couple had so met with President Jacob's newfound son.

And it was why Teo was nervous that day; for he was going to meet with his father for the first time.

The striking resemblance in voice and mannerism between the president and Teo had gone to prove the duo father and son. Much less when a DNA test taken thereafter had a 99.99% result.

But joy, they say, do have a slender frame that breaks too soon.

For Jimi Jacob's joy of reunion with Teo, his biological son, was too soon cut short.

Or, so it seemed.



Like a miracle had singled Teo out as the winner of the design contest; and like a saving grace had rescued him from being expelled in his final year at the University... just like before, Providence again had saved the young man from the Mountana tragedy.

But this time, Teo's heart was shattered.

For his heartthrob Foye died.

Teo had received a phone call just when he was about to embark on his trip with Foye to Mountana.

The person calling had informed him of a fire outbreak in the church hostel. The church hostel was inhabited by displaced children.

Teo couldn't take the fact that the already displaced people would again be displaced by a fire outbreak.

In a moment of frankness and sincerity with himself, he admitted his going to Mountana with his woman was eventually going to be because of a self-centered motive.

He wasn't going to the orphanage there at Mountana because he really wanted to visit them at all.

He was only following his woman there because she wouldn't want to stay with him

through the last few days of December till the New Year festivities.

He had wanted to propose marriage to Foye during this time. Yet it wasn't going to be during the Mountana trip or at the orphanage there.

He had therefore rescheduled the marriage proposal to the time they would have returned from Mountana.

But now, Teo didn't feel like travelling to Mountana with Foye anymore, with what he just heard about the church hostel.

He had thought it was more important to help the fire victims in his home church than go to Mountana with Foye.

Especially because he didn't feel quite justified with the self-centred motive behind his travel.

Foye had wished Teo would go with her but she understood that the church needed her man now than she herself did.

Precisely as clay is in the hands of a potter, so is man in the hands of his Maker. For what clay

wrestles with his potter; querying, ‘Why did you make me so?’

And as God’s ways are past finding out and He Himself absolutely unquestionable, Foye travelled alone to Mountana.

And there she slept that fateful night.

A quiet eternal sleep.

Chapter 23

TEO was in the middle of helping the displaced children in his church when he heard the sad news of the Mountana tragedy.

He dialled Foye immediately; but the call didn't go through at all.

Teo kept on trying to call his woman for days and asked Tim, his right hand man in his

company, to call her for him. But they both couldn't reach Foye on phone.

Teo was shocked to his bones. The reality dawned on him with a frightened shudder.

Foye was dead.

The stark reality was too hard to swallow.

He gazed into space and muttered. 'Foye!'

And it was the last word the shocked young man spoke.

It had been about a week since Teo crumbled under the weight of the shocking news. The young man wouldn't shed a tear or say a word.

He just lay still in a couch in his living room, staring absentmindedly at the plain white asbestos. And he hardly even ate anything solid.

Tim was his boss' caregiver during the whole time. Tim wished his boss would at least cry and get rid of the boxed up emotions.

But tears weren't sufficient to express the sorrows that filled up Teo's heavy heart.

Tim was afraid for his boss already. The young architectural didn't know what to do for Teo.

He had only known Foye as Teo's family. And now that his boss' woman was gone, he didn't know who to call.

Tim was on his way back from a convenient store down the street to get some snacks for his boss when he incidentally met Mia.

Mia recognised the young man as Teo's secretary and waved at him.

Tim didn't wait to exchange pleasantries when he ran to the young woman.

His talk was a little hurried. 'Can you please help us? My boss is... I don't know what to do. He won't talk or eat much. I really don't know how to explain everything...'

Mia calmed the young man down. And asked him to come a little clearer so she could understand him.

But Tim, who had always been an Aaron or mouthpiece for the usually reserved Teo,

couldn't bring his own thoughts into words this time.

Mia knew something was seriously wrong.

She offered to follow the young dude to wherever he was going.

And off they went to Teo's home.



Mia saw the mighty Teo lying weak and gaunt in a couch in his living room. And staring at nothing in particular.

She turned to Tim, looking surprised. 'What happened to Mr Teo?' she asked.

Tim threw his hands up and they only fell back limply.

'Sister Foye is dead,' he said. 'Was a victim of the Mountana tragedy!'

Mia staggered where she stood. 'What?!' she gasped.

Tim moaned. ‘I wish Boss will just eat a little. We can’t afford to lose him too. It’d be too much, huh!’

Mia knew it wasn’t the time to stall things any further, with Teo being like this.

She turned to Tim again. ‘Does he sleep?’

Tim had the response ready. ‘He hadn’t slept in five days!’ He signalled the number at Mia with his fingers.

Mia knew what to do at the instance.

She knew they had to get Teo sedated. But then, she also knew getting Teo admitted into a regular hospital could worsen his depressive state of mind.

Especially with him seeing sickly and moody people around him.

Mia picked up her phone and put a call through to a home call doctor.

Education was of a great importance in Kimberland and, as such, the country had

produced numerous medical doctors than they could employ in the hospitals.

The government had then approved a bill that allowed unemployed doctors to go into homes and treat patients.

Mia put a call through to one of those home call doctors and in no time the doctor arrived.

Teo was placed on a drips and thereafter sedated.

Mia had once stood at the shore of a vast sea of clinical depression, owing to the pressure to get herself an eligible man mounted on her by her mother.

She had learnt about the saving grace and power of God when she read the Gospel of John from the Bible Teo had given her.

Mia had also read about depression from the Internet.

She knew Teo would be stuck in grief for the loss of his girlfriend for so long, particularly if the

décor and furniture arrangement of his living room had the same look.

The intelligent lady decided to help the young architect heal up by redesigning and rearranging his living room.

Mia worked with Tim and gave the living room a lift with a brighter, lighter touch of interior design.

It turned out to lift Teo's spirits. And the young architect was able to escape a looming state of clinical depression; as he gradually healed up as the days went by.

Teo was the one who rescued Mia when the gloomy clouds of depression hovered over her.

And now, Mia had saved Teo from sinking into an endless abyss of gloom.

Chapter 24

JIMI Jacobs had loads of regret, following the tragedy that hit Mountana City.

The sorrows within the president's heart was not only because of the assumed loss of his son in the tragedy; or because of the loss of thousands of other lives.

Jimi's tears didn't only bear grief for the lost souls; but it also bore deep regret for his past action.

Jimi had earlier blamed Utopia. But now, he blamed himself for dining with that devil.

Shifting blames seems to be man's ingrained nature when it comes to exponential public consequence resulting from an action.

But then, the blame game wouldn't appear an escape byway when one harbours a haunting secret in his heart.

Especially when the secret could be the reason for mass tragedy.

If secrecy was the prime principle by which Utopia conducted its businesses, and President Jacobs had so far abode by this principle; then, it appears only logical that the Kimberland president had a hand in the tragedy that just hit his nation.

Jimi was a committed Christian. He wished so dearly he hadn't eaten with the Devil; regardless of how long his own spoon was.

The secret of the deal with Utopia was now beginning to weigh Jimi's heart down. And it had already become much too heavy to bear.

The president's athletic build had been from his habits.

The middle aged man would take a long walk when he was stressed. He would run when he was angry. And he would swim when he was sad.

But the feeling of regret was what he was yet to develop a habit for.

The first lady expected her husband to go for a swim till he'd shed all tears in the swimming pool. She was prepared to stay by and just watch him swim his sadness away.

Demi was concerned for her loving husband and she had taken a walk around the presidential villa of the Rock Castle to find him.

She'd taken it upon herself to locate him without asking any of the state house aides. And there she found her husband at their private flower garden.

Demi found Jimi boxing a tree with his bare fists; with blood oozing from between his swollen fingers.

She was utterly shocked and dumbfounded.

She rushed down to her poor man and hugged him from the back.

She couldn't help the tears. 'Ah, Jimi! Jimi! Jimi!' she cried.

Jimi was tired himself. He turned his head and glanced back at his wife. His eyes were red and moist with tears.

The president submitted himself into his wife's arms.

And he cried at her bosom.



All of Dr Oye's plans had so far fallen in place.

Utopia had cleared the land of diamond ores Oye had selected for the monstrous financial and political organisation.

All Oye had to do now was occupy Mountana for the Utopia empire.

But then, he wouldn't just go to the ruined city that had its 800,000 residents destroyed overnight. And go ahead to occupy the land to mine diamonds for Utopia.

As much as the old man wanted to occupy Mountana for diamonds, he didn't want to stay in the forefront now.

He knew the Kimberians are so edgy at the moment.

One thing that could spark up the flame of rage in Kimberians was someone doing anything silly with the burnt city at the time.

Especially doing anything with a commercial intent.

Oye admitted his intention would be too obvious if he went ahead to make onsite preparations for Utopia's mining.

He admitted Kimberians would easily suspect he was behind the mysterious destruction of Mountana City.

Yet the old man hadn't got enough time to wait for Kimberland to complete their endless mourning.

He'd had an eye on Mountana's diamond for ages; and his dream was just being hatched.

The fifty-nine-year-old couldn't wait to hold his glittering giant dream in his aging hands.

He thought for so long on what to do, where he sat in his office at Kimberland's Rock Castle.

An idea struck his mind.

Utopia had to finish the work it started.

Oye picked up his phone and put a call through to Devlyn McCathy, the CEO.



Kimberland's first couple sat together on the grass in the flower garden as the president wept in the arms of his wife.

Demi laid his husband's head over her heart and patted him on the back.

She knew Jimi's outburst of pent-up emotions were beyond the obvious. And she knew she had to wait for him to tell her what the problem was.

Demi was the first person to speak.

'When I was a girl,' she began, 'I got scared a lot; and I'd scream for dad, cos dad was my first hero.'

'I cried a lot anytime I was hurt; and it was mum that patted me till I felt better.'

She paused a second and gazed down at her husband.

'But then, I met you my own man. And you took on the role of two people in my life.'

'You've been so strong for me and have so cared for me all these years we've spent together.'

She paused to swallow.

‘You know, I used to envy our unborn children when we first got wedded. I envied the fact that they’ll have a perfect dad.

‘But when we can’t have children after several years we’ve been together, I felt so sad. It was sad that I’d be the only one that gets to see what a wonderful man you are.

‘But then, you came surprising me with your good, fatherly heart. You suggested we adopted two orphanages. You made us parents to dozens of children.

‘My husband, you really don’t know how that alone fulfills me!’

A slight grunt escaped Jimi’s throat as he raised his head and sat right up; his countenance having a brighter lift already.

Demi went on. ‘And just when I thought I’d seen all of you, you decided to be a father to all of Kimberland. You decided to take the entire nation in your care.’

She gazed at him. ‘You’ve been such a wonderful man, my love. And you still are!’

Demi's words were like a soothing balm to Jimi's aching heart. The tender words were taking his pains away as they rubbed on him.

'Ah, thank you!' he grunted.

Demi slid her hands into his.

She went on. 'We've been through thick and thin. Walking through a hurt is only bearable when there's someone who shares the pain with you.'

'I know your tears are more than what I can see, darling. I've watched you in the past few years change into a man I don't really know.'

'But I've been selfish; thinking only about myself alone. Lamenting that you're keeping a secret from me.'

'I only care about you to my own advantage. I've only wanted you to open up to me because of me. Not because of you.'

'I never thought of what pain you could be going through, bearing the burden all by yourself.'

‘I’ve really been selfish in my concern. And I am sorry, darling.’

Jimi only looked on.

Demi resumed.

‘Seeing you this way has made me see the heavy burden you carry alone in your heart and I realise my selfishness in worrying about the hurt you’re hiding from me.’

‘I realise I should rather have encouraged you to tell it to God. I should have been really worried about you in person and not about just how it concerns me.’

Jimi heaved a sigh and Demi held his hands in hers with a firmer grip.

She went on.

‘My husband, I won’t force you to tell me the reason for your hurt. What does it matter if you tell me, when I can’t get rid of it myself?’

‘I will tell you to tell it to the One who can entirely get rid of it. You don’t have to tell me

anything, darling. Let's just tell everything to God.

'Let's lay it down at His feet right now and right here.'

Jimi heaved a heavy sigh, slid off his hands from Demi's grip and buried his head in his palms.

He raised his head and spoke; his weary voice trembling like a hurting child.

'How do I face God', he said, 'when I can't even muster the courage to face you and tell you the things I've done?'

'Demi, I've wasted thousands of humans lives! I'm not the man you used to know.'

'I have so sinned beyond redemption. I'm not even worthy to stand before the Almighty God; let alone asking Him for forgiveness.'

Demi turned to him.

'No, darling,' she objected. 'I know you know this; but I will remind you of it. Our God is a

loving and gracious Father and He will forgive us. God will forgive you, my dear.

‘Let’s just confess it to Him. Let’s tell God everything. Wouldn’t it be right to be disciplined by God than be punished by the Devil?’

‘You know we didn’t get here in a day. A lot of steps got us to this junction of sinfulness. If we delay further in seeking God’s forgiveness, things will get even worse.’

‘Jimi, God is a loving God. He will definitely forgive us if we sincerely repent of our sins.’

Jimi knelt down and his wife joined him. And the first couple began to say a prayer of confession and repentance.

Tears trickled down the face of the Kimberland president as he laid his burdens down at the feet of the Lord in prayer.

And the Utopia evil didn’t know its grip on Jimi Jacobs was slipping off already.

Chapter 25

IT was mixed reactions for the people of Kimberland when international news media aired Utopia's press release to rebuild the ruined Mountana City.

It was only weeks after the Mountana tragedy.

And the powerful organisation was already offering to rebuild the city of the previous

Olympic Games host nation, entirely free of charge.

Kimberians didn't know if to rejoice at the offer. Or else to linger long in their grief for the 800,000 dead residents, and leave the once lively city in ruins.

It had been a few weeks since Teo was stuck in grief for his girlfriend.

Mia had joined hands with Tim, Teo's secretary, in caring for Teo. And the successful thirty-year-old architect was gradually recovering.

But then, the news of the organisation's offer to immediately rebuild Mountana did hit the sick young man with a boomerang effect, where he lay in couch in his living room.

The news had done more than the medications administered to Teo for the past few weeks could have done to get him on his feet.

Teo jumped to his feet and turned off the TV.

His sudden reaction alerted Mia who was busy with her phone, going through her timelines on social media.

The young journalist had come to pay a visit to Teo that morning.

She was soon to leave; but she wanted to hand over Teo's care to Tim before she would leave.

And so, the young lady had decided to wait for Tim to arrive.

Mia was alerted when the sick young dude sprang up all of a sudden. She stared at him. She couldn't believe Teo was on his feet already.

The young lady was concerned that Teo wasn't all right, at first. But she watched his demeanour closely and she could tell at once he was really fine.

Teo walked into his bedroom in sprints and came out again dressed up to go out already.

He walked over to the dining table and picked up his car keys.

Teo walked across into the living room and put a few things in a handbag.

Mia was surprised and curious. 'Where are you heading to?' she queried. 'Are you okay? Are you already feeling well, or something?'

Teo halted in his steps. 'I'm fine,' he said in a low, determined voice. 'I just need to get somewhere.'

Mia knew at the moment that there was nothing she could do to stop Teo from doing whatever he intended to do.

And she also knew the young man wouldn't tell her where he was heading to.

She thought for a moment and decided to follow him so she could ensure he was completely fine as he claimed.

'All right,' Mia replied. 'Can you please drop me on your way?' she requested.

Teo waved a hand to signal he agreed.

The two turned out of the house and Teo bolted the doors locked.

Teo hopped towards his SUV and Mia doubled up her steps behind him.

The young man held his car door ajar at the driver's side. And he was about getting in when he spoke across to Mia standing on the other side of the car.

'I hope you don't mind sitting at the back seat, Miss Mia,' he said.

Mia understood perfectly. She understood Teo couldn't bear to have another woman sit in front beside him while he drove because of Foye.

She agreed with a mild smile.

Both guys hopped into the SUV and Teo drove out into the streets.

Mia knew that if she had told Teo she wanted to go with him to see where he was headed, he wouldn't have agreed to let her monitor him.

And that was why the smart young woman had asked Teo to drop her off on the way.

The twenty-eight-year-old sat in the back seat; and much too soon, Teo had forgotten there was a lady at his back seats.

The young man sat rooted behind the steering and clamped the wheels with firm hands, as his destination occupied his mind and focus.

Before Mountana's rebuilding would commence and all evidences about the disaster would be buried, Teo needed to know how Foye died there.

And Mia wanted to know where Teo was headed.



After the outburst of emotion and the prayers of confession Jimi had with his wife, the Kimberland president was gradually recovering from the painful sorrow and regret he bore.

President Jimi Jacobs was yet to fully recover. And when he heard the press release from Utopia, it made him crumble down to his knees.

Utopia was really coming to stay in his country.

It was really conquering Kimberland's Mountana City.

Jimi knew it was time to take action. But he didn't know exactly what action he should take.

But one thing he was sure of was the fact that he would never allow the Utopia empire take a portion of his country.

Regardless of the secret deal he had with that monstrous devil, and which resulted in the destruction of Mountana, along with all its 800,000 residents – regardless of all, Jimi Jacobs was determined to see the end of evil's legal hold on him.

After a long thought, Jimi decided to get his first lady involved.

He needed to come even more open and not hide behind himself.

He needed to tell Demi every little thing.



After about an hour drive, Teo had left Kakakhi and was on the highways that connected the city of Kakakhi to the neighboring Yemija District.

Mia gave a deliberate cough at the back seat.

And only now the young architect remembered that there was someone else in his car.

Teo pulled over immediately. He halted and turned off the ignition.

He glanced back at Mia; a set of frown curves making his forehead.

He queried. 'Why didn't you tell me to drop you off in Kakakhi?'

Mia knew Teo was agitated realising he hadn't dropped her off. She also knew Teo wouldn't drop her off in the middle of nowhere.

She decided to explain to him.

'I'm sorry. I was surprised you suddenly sprang up from rest and headed out. I was curious to see where you were going.'

Teo interposed her. 'Yeah...! Because you don't trust I was completely fine, right?'

Mia retorted. 'Yes.'

Teo turned forwards and sighed. He paused a little, held the wheel with a firm grip and swallowed hard.

He felt really angry.

Teo knew how Mia had been taking care of him and he understood that the young lady was concerned about him. Yet he couldn't help being angry with her.

He didn't want to be rude to her; yet he wanted to be so stern.

Teo was still looking for the words to express himself when Mia spoke up.

‘I guess we are going to... Mountana.’

She leaned a little forward to pick an inaudible reaction from Teo.

She went on. ‘You’re still not in perfect shape; so please let me drive. I’m really sorry. I wanted to trust that you are completely fine but I just couldn’t.’

Teo was quiet but he was angrier. And it seemed Mia’s apology was a fuel to the flame of his irritation.

He was about to blurt out angry words when Mia spoke again.

‘I’m really sorry for involving myself. But as a reporter, I also think the rebuilding offer is too early.’

‘It’s not that I’m a fan of antiquity or ruins; but at least I believe we should get to know if the cause of the Mountana tragedy was really a volcanic eruption, as the news have it – which

I'm beginning to doubt – or whether it's manmade. And if it is manmade...'

Teo interposed. 'We need to know who that devil is!' he blurted out in a fit of rage.

Knowing Mia shared the same goal with him on the Mountana issue Teo's spirit was lifted already.

Mia looked at him and smiled to herself.

Teo glanced back at her. 'You can drive, uh? And you have your permit?'

Mia was taken aback. 'Huh...? Oh, yes.'

Teo turned on the ignition and rolled out the car engine. 'Well, it's not like I'm tired. I just want you to drive since this trip is going to be an extension of work for you.'

He didn't want to sound weak to Mia. He had only hidden his tiredness behind the excuse.

But Mia knew Teo was too tired to drive. She just smiled and was grateful the stubborn dude suggested sitting back and rest in the first place.

She didn't know how to tell him to rest and let her drive.

Teo stepped out of the car as well as Mia. And the two exchanged seats.

Teo reclined his head against the head rest in the back seat.

He blared. 'Let's go find what those devils hid in Mountana, Miss Mia!'

Chapter 26

THE first lady didn't need to hear from her husband firsthand to know a new trouble was brewing in the country.

Demi Jacobs just watched the news and heard that some financial organisation were stretching out a charitable hand to Kimberland to help rebuild the ruined Mountana City.

From the things the first lady knew of politics and politicking, she could tell something wasn't right with the offer Utopia was making.

But then Demi didn't know exactly what was wrong.

While she was still in the process of connecting the dots and arranging the puzzles of the astonishing events of the past few weeks, the clearer picture Demi had wanted to get came right in front of her.

Through the lens of her husband's detail.

Jimi Jacobs went to his wife and told everything he had got to do with Utopia. He told Demi about the huge no-interest loan he got for his administration.

He told Demi how the rule of thumb was to keep all dealings with the financial organisation a thing of utmost confidentiality and secrecy.

And Jimi told his first lady how he had signed to the terms that allowed Utopia had had a grip on him.

And how that had escalated into the destruction of Mountana City.

Demi wasn't as surprised with the details as her husband had expected her to be.

She had already been guessing Jimi's administration must have taken a huge big loan to cover for the larger than life projects it had executed so far.

Besides, what could be more shocking for the first lady of Kimberland when the country had suddenly lost a whole city to a tragedy no one knows anything about.

Demi had also seen her agitated husband punched a tree until his fists bled, just days earlier.

Jimi's details now were only like a confirmation of the first lady's deductions.

Jimi concluded his long story, heaving a heavy sigh.

His last words had a worrisome mood.

‘Demi, if we let them in, they won’t stop at just acquiring Mountana. They’d go all the way to acquire the whole country, you know.’

Realising what Jimi had led the country into, the forty-three-year-old first lady knew Mountana was just the starting point for Utopia.

Being an economist herself, Demi was much aware of the fact that the acquisition of a company usually starts with purchasing a number of shares.

Or, simply forging some seemingly goodwill partnerships.

And it doesn’t just stop, until the company is fully acquired.

Utopia was not a company that acquired other companies. The organisation had a bigger appetite.

For it acquired not just companies. But countries.

Utopia's plan with its dealings with Kimberland was to acquire the Southern African country.

The organisation had penetrated into Kimberland through the economy of the country.

And now, they'd proceed to take over Kimberland's Mountana City to who knows where.

It was a serious problem and the first family knew it.

It wasn't time to be accruing blame and Demi knew that already. Moreover, the first lady knew the weight of the guilt her husband carried was still so much heavy on him.

Demi decided to share in Jimi's burden. She was determined to stand with her husband through the journey now.

Demi replied him. 'I know, Jimi. I can predict where this acquisition game is headed. But we won't sit down and fold our hands; and watch them take our country from us.

‘Yet we need to be really smart and calculative with the steps we take; so they don’t backfire.’

She sat up on the two seater sofa the couple were sitting in. ‘First of all, we need to buy ourselves some time so we can plan our next step well.’

Jimi looked on. He only cared more about listening to his wife.

He had always known Demi to be genius with ideas. And her high level intelligence since her early twenties was what attracted Jimi to her.

Some twenty something years before.

Demi went on. ‘Thank God we’ve confessed to God. God will definitely see us through.’

She paused for a bit and then an idea struck her mind.

‘Yeah... let’s have a press conference. Utopia has taken over the international media and is using the world’s media to pressure us into giving in to their offer.’

‘So, make a press conference with our own media here. Make the press statement with a sincere expression like the one you have on you now.’

She finished her words. ‘I will write the words of your press release this time.’

Jimi nodded with a knowing smile.

He knew Utopia was in for a rude shock.



It was about five in the evening and Teo and Mia finally arrived at Mountana. In the Northern Province of Kimberland.

Teo parked the car at the city outskirts, far from the city ruins. And they walked cautiously into the debris of the ruins ahead.

They had walked for about forty-five minutes when they began to see much of ruins of the ex-city.

Teo had brought a drone with him and he flew the device over the city.

Mia and Teo picked up things on the ground as they matched along the ruins. And they examined the ruins in their hands closely.

After curious examination, the duo found their answer.

Mia had once been sent to an island in New Zealand where a volcano erupted, to cover the aftermath of the eruption for CVN.

Being a hardworking reporter, Mia had studied about dormant and active volcanos as well as volcanic eruptions before embarking on her work trip to New Zealand.

With the ash from the ruins of the burnt city spread out in Mia's two palms in a careful study, the versed reporter could tell that the cause was not a volcanic eruption.

The specimen appeared in texture and physical composition exactly like ash from an explosion, rather than volcanic ash.

Moreover, if it the cause was an eruption, the duo couldn't dare set feet on the core site right

then. Because of the poisonous gases that would've saturated the atmosphere.

And if it were, the volcanic lava would still be discharging since the first day of eruption.

Yet another major observation Mia made was the fact that the city wasn't almost buried in a mass of volcanic dusts as expected as the aftermath of an eruption.

The drone Teo flew over the city had covered the mountain where the assumed volcano was said to have erupted.

But Teo could see fresh and verdant greenery over and around the mountain.

It was unbelievable. An assumed volcanic eruption that had killed every living soul in the city couldn't consume the green vegetation around it.

Teo and Mia were certain there was no volcanic eruption in Mountana as the news media had reported.

The duo was in agreement that it wasn't an eruption that had turned the city of 800,000 souls into ruins and ashes.

It was something else which they had to find out at all cost.

Chapter 27

IT was eight o'clock in the evening and the day's wearying activities had come to a close in Kimberland.

But then, the voice of President Jimi Jacobs on the TV sparked a brilliant firework panorama in the sombre sky of Kimberians' frame of mind.

All the broadcast stations in the country picked the president's press release at that time, as President Jacobs himself made an official address to Utopia's offer.

The president's words rolled out in a composed, decorous candour as he calmly read his speech.

'Good people of Kimberland,' he began: 'it is in the spirit of mourning the loss of our dear countrymen in the city of Mountana, that we have decided to address the pressing issue.

'We earnestly pray that God in His mercy will comfort us in our grief and give us fortitude to bear the irrecoverable loss.

'This is what our administration have to say to the offer from the multinational Utopia to rebuild the Mountana City in subsequent months.

'We say that Kimberland do appreciate the gesture but we are refusing the offer. Kimberland is not ready to forget the loss of our countrymen yet.

‘Nor shall we be in haste to erase the vacuum they have left behind in the sands of time.

‘We shall not do the ex-citizens of Mountana a disservice by wiping their footprints out of the ruins of Mountana in a blink of an eye.

‘The instant rebuilding of the city means to Kimberland far more than an ultrasonic redevelopment: it means an obliteration of that which one do not miss.

‘Of what essence, then, is the rebuilding of our ex-city by a foreign body where we ourselves cannot yet refill the empty spaces our lost brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, and indeed friends and family – when we cannot yet refill the spaces they left empty.

‘Therefore, before anything can be made to sprout again on the soil of Mountana, it is our patriotic duty to get to the root of this tragedy and find the exact cause of the disaster that claimed a whole city.

‘And this exactly is what we shall do.

‘Besides, if the minimum days we spend to mourn the dead in our culture here in Kimberland is three; how long, then, shall it take to mourn eight hundred thousand people?’

‘Presently, I Jimi Jacobs am not at my best because I am still mourning; and so, I will not be able to do the calculations for our intended benefactor.’

‘But one thing we are certain of is that the mourning had only just begun.’

‘Fellow citizens, let us cry out our hurt in tears and scream out our heart of pains. Let us go through the grief without holding back. So that we can all get over this and become a happier people tomorrow.’

‘May the souls of our departed 800,000 countrymen rest in perfect peace’

‘Long live the Democratic Republic of Kimberland.’



Mia had just finished watching the president's address on TV in her room at a guest house.

Teo and Mia had both retired to a neighboring district to Mountana City. After their tiresome survey of the Mountana ruins earlier that evening.

The two had lodged in a guest house to repose for the day.

Mia was relieved at the president's words. She heaved a sigh and muttered. 'At least, our president didn't lose himself in the international fanfare.'

Unlike the relief Jimi Jacob's words brought to Mia, the press statement had rather infuriated Teo.

Teo had thought the president's tears at the mass funeral were only crocodile tears.

The young man always had the idea that trusting a rotten goblin was far better than trusting a politician.

And he believed his father as the President of Kimberland was no different.

Losing his girlfriend Foye in the Mountana tragedy had taken a big toll on Teo and he harboured a ton of anger for his father.

His father the president seemed like the right target to pour his frustrations on since Foye died.

He reasoned that the big tragedy wouldn't have happened without the Kimberland president not having a hand in it one way or the other.

With how infuriated Teo was at Jimi Jacobs' speech, sleeping would be almost an impossible feat for him now.

But he couldn't stop himself from being really angry.

Mia was about to lay down her head to rest for the day when she remembered Teo's pills.

Mia had taken Teo's pills along with her when Teo headed out of his home the previous day.

The young woman had been bothered about Teo's health when Teo suddenly headed out dressed up like he was going somewhere a little far.

She had been bothered Teo may suddenly faint and had packed all the medicine she could find on his table in the living room.

Since Foye died, Teo had been relying on sleeping pills for rest at night and Mia being his caregiver knew this.

She decided to put a call through to the reception for the room service.

Mia preferred to send a staff to the young man rather than go to his room and hand him the pills. She reasoned going to a man's room at night could be suggestive.

Room service soon came up for Mia. And Teo's sleeping pills were sent to him.

And Teo could sleep like a child through the long night.

And wake up by sunrise to fight like a man.

Chapter 28

WHILE the president's speech had calmed the storm of worries for the bereaved people of Kimberland, it was rather the opposite for Dr Oye.

Oye had thought between two options before he decided to go for the option of using the people.

Utopia indeed had a legal claim over Mountana, Oye reasoned.

But if it claimed the right to occupy the ex-city straight on, the conquest might boomerang now and instantly paint Utopia the enemy of the people.

Using the feelings of the people was meant to be a second step; but Oye was rather ahead of himself. He wanted to be steps ahead and his faster pace now led him to losing out altogether.

Dr Oye had about five mobile phones; and which included three burner phones. He used especially the burner phones for his calls with the underworld.

Oye would usually choose a particular phone for a particular call. But here and now the phones were competing for use with the old man.

For almost all the five phones were ringing at the same time.

The president's speech on TV the night before had put both the almost-fifty-nine-year-old as

well as the Utopia organisation in a confused situation already.

And the old man, being Utopia's agent in charge of the president of Kimberland, was already on a hot seat.

Oye was the one who suggested to Utopia that they win over the people of Kimberland before they would proceed to claim Mountana.

And now that his plan had fallen flat with President Jimi Jacob's speech of the night before, Oye had to give answers to Utopia.

The old man was frustrated. And yet he knew he couldn't just ignore the repetitive calls from the multinational Utopia.

Knowing already what the calls were for, he decided to do something crazy. He decided to pick all calls at the same time.

He spread out his phones on the table before him that early morning and picked up the calls.

He was quiet while he allowed the callers to speak first.

A confused jumble of separate voices with Russian, British, American and Chinese accents of English, poured out into the old man's ears all at once.

'He-llo, Mister. Kimberland's situation... go a-head an' explain!'

'Hello... what's this ought to mean? What plan have you got?'

'Mr Oh-yei... What's this we hearing from Kimberland? How you gonna manage this, huh?'

'Huawei! Mister Oy'... what' going on 'n Kimberland!

Oye took a deep breath and then spoke up.

'The situation is under control, sirs. I shall update you through an email in the next one hour. I need to put some things together first.'

The callers were slow to respond this time. And before they could gather their thoughts and speak, Oye decided to end the call.

‘Thank you for the call,’ he said and hanged up on all calls.

And then, he went back to the drawing board.

To map out another strategy for Utopia’s entry into Kimberland.



It was already seven that morning. Mia was up already and was prepared to return to Mountana; but her partner in the investigation was yet to come awake.

Teo wasn’t an early bird. That explained why his firm usually resumed work as late as nine in the morning.

Mia checked out of her own lodge at the guest house and waited for Teo at the reception.

It had been an hour the young woman had been waiting

She’d earlier thought Teo would only be a bit late before joining her. But she was already getting tired of the long wait.

Mia decided to put a call through Teo.

Only then, it dawned on her that Teo must have taken his sleeping pills the previous night. And he waking up late now meant the young man was having a good sleep, Mia reasoned.

She decided to wait for the sleeping young man for as long as she could. Soon enough, Teo joined Mia at the reception.

The two had their breakfast and then headed to the ruined city of Mountana again.

They would continue with their onsite investigation.

Till they eventually dug out exactly what – or who – was behind the tragedy.



President Jimi Jacobs could see that the speech he delivered to refuse Utopia's offer to help rebuild Mountana City, had turned out positive.

The people were pleased with the president's decision that the nation should take time to mourn the colossal loss. Rather than allow a foreign body pester them into hurriedly rebuilding the ruined city.

The nation was again filled with praises for President J. J.'s characteristic humanity.

Jimi was relieved that Utopia's grand scheme to conquer the ex-city was stalled for the time being.

Together with his brilliant, supportive wife who had help strategise his timely response, the president could now sit back and map out the next move.

And it had to be a big one.

Something that'd cripple Utopia's game once and for all.



Dr Oye eventually came to a solution.

He reasoned Utopia had the claim over Mountana already. But he feared public opinion and the side the president had made it drift towards.

Oye admitted that the people would certainly oppose any of Utopia's move to occupy Mountana at the time.

Especially with the president's last address that publicly rejected Utopia's offer to rebuild the ex-city.

But now, the old Utopia agent had found a way forward.

He had decided to use public opinion, too. And sway it in favour of Utopia's mission.

Oye was prepared to raise people's suspicion on Jimi Jacob's refusal to allow Utopia rebuild the ruined city. He had resolved to let the political leader lose the trust of the people.

The little old schemer had decided to use Kimberians against their president.

It was a fight to bloodshed for both giants. And neither could back down now.



With the presence of verdant greenery around Mount Doume in the ruined Mountana City, Teo and Mia were certain that the cause of the ruins in the ex-city wasn't a volcanic eruption.

Mia let out a deep breath. 'We could now rule out the option of a natural cause with this,' she said.

'Except it's a case where Mountana sinned like Sodom and Gomorrah and God rained fire on them,' she added.

Teo turned an instant angry eye at Mia. The young man wouldn't take anyone making a single joke out of the Mountana tragedy.

But then, the look in Mia's eyes didn't suggest the young journalist was joking around. But it was simply Mia's manner of talking.

Teo still wanted to be sure Mia wasn't joking about the tragedy.

For since the tragedy, the entirety of Mountana City had come represent Foye to the young man. And Foye had come to stand for the entirety of Mountana.

It had become a case of synecdoche, with a psychological variation, for the grieving young man.

Teo didn't want any blurry line between good and bad when it came to Foye. He wouldn't take even a passing comment or joke that would hurt the memory of his precious woman.

He was about to lash out a piece of his mind when Mia finished her words.

'And, of course, I know it's not a 21st century Sodom and Gomorrah,' Mia said. 'So, we can entirely conclude the disaster is manmade.'

Teo's gaze at Mia dissolved into a blank expression.

And Mia looked the other way; backing away from him a few steps. She guessed her statement just sprinkled salt on Teo's fresh hurt.

The two continued to examining the ruins while Teo flew a drone over the ex-city. And then, another discovery came to light.

Teo compared the map of the city they printed out from the Internet earlier that morning with the ruined city his drone captured.

Teo discovered it wasn't the entire city that was razed down. It was just the inhabited parts.

There were no evidences of fire at the uninhabited waterfalls, around the hills and mountains, or in the valleys. None of the vacant tourist attractions were razed down.

With the new finding, the two guys were double sure that the destruction of the city was meticulously planned.

Staring at the footage from the drone, Teo spoke; his voice firm and decisive. 'The cause of the fires can only be explosives. They didn't result from an accident.'

Teo raised his head to ensure Mia was listening to him. He saw the young lady coming closer again and he decided to walk up to her to ease her.

He showed her the footage. ‘What d’ you think?’ he asked.

Mia nodded her head in agreement. ‘I agree with you. The destruction was systematically planned and orchestrated. Some people wreaked this havoc.’

Teo grunted with delight. He glanced up at Mia and nodded. ‘Some big people, for that matter.’

Mia hummed in agreement.

Teo’s tone of voice took a firmer stance. ‘So, now that we’ve found a major headway, what we need to do now is investigate our president.’

Mia was shocked at Teo’s words.

‘President Jimi Jacobs! What has that got to do with the explosive stuff? I believe we just need

to find out who those devils are as you already said.'

'I've caught them from the start,' Teo interposed. 'I've suspected our president from the beginning. We just have to find his connection to this tragedy!'

Mia looked on, stupefied.

Teo went on. 'Besides those who came to bomb Mountana were just messengers. The real conspiracy is what we should go for. We've got to get to the bottom of this.'

Mia was surprised that Teo was trying too hard to tie Jimi Jacobs around the conspiracy. And just out of the blues, at that.

But beyond these, Mia was also a fan of President J. J. and she wouldn't take any word against her model statesman.

As much as Mia wanted to get to the root of the case with Teo, the young journalist wouldn't investigate with a suspect in her mind.

More especially when the suspect was President Jacobs. And she wanted to remove the politician from Teo's list before the two went on with the investigation.

She turned to Teo.

'I'm sure it won't be good if we go ahead investigating this case with a bias mindset from the start. President Jimi Jacobs is innocent. He's a good Christian and everyone knows that!'

Teo smirked. 'If we suspect someone else,' he retorted, 'you will be fine, right? So far it's not your President Jacobs.'

Mia knew she'd been caught. 'Ok-ay,' she said in a slim, weak voice, 'I give up already.'

Teo looked at Mia's cute, defeated face and smiled.

'Okay,' he said, 'let's wrap up and head back to Kakakhi. We'll meeting often to continue the investigation when we reach home.'

Teo was short of words in thanking Mia for involving herself in the investigation that mattered to him a great deal.

Mia had nursed him back to health when he collapsed with traumatic shock only weeks back, Teo reasoned.

On top of that, she'd followed him to Mountana and worked tirelessly with him.

Teo sincerely felt like hugging Mia and thank her profusely.

He instantly got a hold of himself. 'Thank you for coming with me Miss Mia,' he said quietly. 'And thank you for my sleeping pills.'

Mia smiled. 'You are most welcome, sir.'

Chapter 29

THE praises of President Jacobs only lasted two days before Oye turned the music around.

Dr Oye sought the president's audience that early morning.

Jimi Jacobs knew he had himself punched Utopia with one big blow. And he guessed Oye

must have been sent by the organisation to pass him a message.

Jimi was all smiles. He now owned the game and held sway over the next moves.

The middle aged president was eager to see how Utopia would react to his countermeasure; and so, he allowed Oye in.

Oye walked in. His steps were as hasty as a battalion's march on the way to stop a war, or start one.

The look on his face, too, was as earnest as that of a scientist developing a vaccine to combat a widespread virus.

The old man perched himself in a comfy armchair next to the president's seat at the guest reception area of the executive office.

Oye didn't wait to exchange pleasantries when he zipped open his bag and brought out copies of some newspapers in the country; alongside his phone tablet.

Jimi watched the old man; a little too curious about what he was up to.

Oye drew out two broad glass stools around him, threw the newspapers on them and spread them out to make the front pages stand out clear.

He placed the phone tablet at a corner on the broad arm of the president's armchair.

Oye flipped on the screen and it showed a preview page of a news article in one of the popular online news blog in the country.

Jimi looked closely, curiously reaching out a hand to pick up the tablet and a copy of the newspaper at the same time. 'Erm... what is this about?'

The president decided to forgo the tablet in the moment. And, leaning forward to pick up a newspaper copy, he was suddenly thrown off-balance at the sight of the headlines.

With a newspaper in his hand, Jimi shot back his eyes to stare at the tablet. And he could see fairly similar articles on the online blog.

Frustrated and overwhelmed, he burst out. ‘Goodness gracious! What exactly are you doing?!’

The newspapers and online blogs contain the news articles Oye had sent to the news media the previous day.

And the articles right from their headlines strongly hinted that the president had a major hand in the mysterious Mountana tragedy.

One that deserved tenacious probing and investigation.

Oye picked up one of the newspapers and spoke up. His tone of voice was far calmer and nicer than Jimi ever expected it to be.

‘My president sir,’ Oye called, ‘the informants I have at those news media coming up with this – those eyes I have there got me to know about the inciting articles just this morning. Before the press would get it out in tomorrow’s dailies.’

He looked into Jimi’s eyes. ‘I was absolutely shocked, sir. I could barely stop all these from

getting published. It took me everything I've got to stall them.'

Oye laid down the papers on the table before him.

Jimi stared speechless at the newspaper he had picked up a while ago. His lips quivered as his blank gaze ran forth and back across the front page in a daze.

A slight headache buzzed through the left side of his cranium at the instance. He leaned fully back in his seat, bent his left arm and held the nape of his neck with a hand.

The newspaper in his right hand slid off his grip and fell to the ground.

Jimi wasn't expecting this.

He couldn't believe that Utopia would go to the length of defaming and destroying him just to lay hold on the ex-city they razed down.

That, that monstrous devil would even make him the scape goat for the evil they wrought.

He was lost altogether. He was lost for words. He stammered. ‘This... this is...’

‘Defamation of character, Your Excellency!’ Oye interposed.

He stared at Jimi’s smitten face for a moment and warmed up to him.

‘You know,’ he resumed, ‘I had to threaten those media companies that if these articles get published they would all face the music.’

‘Now, the good news is, I can stop all these articles from being published.’

‘But the not-so-good is this: since the Mountana issue is still fresh in people’s mind, I’m not sure we can stop the media for a long time.’

Jimi was dazed and he bowed himself forwards.

The Kimberland president couldn’t believe Utopia could go this far to get themselves to conquer his country.

He was lost in thought when Oye resumed speaking.

‘What is your plan, sir? What should we do to keep the media quiet sir?’

Jimi didn’t reply a word. And only now, his mobile phone buzzed and he didn’t take notice until Oye tapped him.

Jimi came back to his consciousness, raised his head and picked up the call.

And the call was from Utopia. It was Devyln McCathy calling.

‘Hello,’ Jimi spoke first.

The deep toned voice of the caller took over. ‘I guess you got lucky this time, Mr President. The news articles didn’t get published as we planned.

‘But you can’t always get lucky, you know. We’re giving you just seven days from now. And that’s a full week.

‘If you don’t hand Mountana City to us in a pleasant press release, you can be sure you’ll never be able to fathom what we’ll do!

‘For the sake of emphasis, we’ve sent an email to you. So, check through your inbox.’

With that, Utopia’s CEO hung up.

Jimi’s brow was covered with beads of sweat. And Oye entertained himself with the sight of the mighty and witty President Jacobs cowering at the brazen foot of the powerful Utopia.

The old chameleon looked at the newspapers on the table and gave a quick, unnoticed smirk.

He thought to himself. ‘Now, this man will know the game’s always been mine from the very beginning.’

Well, the fact of threatening articles finding their way onto the preview copies of the newspapers, was exactly Oye’s meticulous scheme.

And bringing the news articles to the president could be dubbed anything other than an act of goodwill.

Indeed, Oye had his underhand schemes plotted out so well.

And the old conspirator acted them out to the president without the latter knowing the informant in front of him was the very plotter.

Devlyn had only made a rehearsed special appearance in Oye's dramatic scheme, with the timely phone call.

Using the influence and power he'd built in years, Oye had sent out the news articles with their suggestive headlines to both newspapers and online news media.

And with a suggestive tip that President Jacobs had a hand in the Mountana tragedy.

But then, Oye didn't permit the news to be published. He had only asked the media outlets to make a preview copy for just him.

And they were to wait on him till he gave them a directive to publish the articles.

For Oye, the day to publish them would be the last day of Utopia's seven-day ultimatum.

If or when Jimi Jacobs refused to comply.



Jimi went home early, that day. He didn't wait till the closing hour to inform his darling wife of the new development.

Oye had left the newspapers with the president as a reminder. And they were the souvenirs of shock Jimi had brought home to his wife.

Demi saw the news and was equally devastated. The first family could contain anything but not a dark spot to their immaculate honour apparel.

Demi could now tell that Utopia, and whatever it the organisation was about, was way scarier than she'd ever imagined.

Jimi told his first lady about the seven-day ultimatum he'd been given. He also told her about the email said sent him from Utopia concerning the issue.

The couple both went through the email together. And Demi did the reading.

Mr Jimi Jacobs,

I am amazed at the fact that you even dare to refuse our offer to rebuild Mountana City in the guise of your lame excuse of mourning.

You know right well why Utopia have to own your country's Mountana City but I will not be stressing that again in this email.

Since you claim to still be in mourning for the 800,000 lives that we bombed up at Mountana, I hope the mere fact of national mourning would be a loud reminder to you of what Utopia is capable of.

So you don't dare talk back in Utopia's face. Like you foolishly did in your last presidential address.

Do you remember last year's 29th of December that you were supposed to pay back the loan you took from us?

I will refresh your memory. So, you will not dare play another silly game and make me angry enough to raze down your entire Kimberland itself.

While you hoped for us to extend the consensual loan repayment window beyond the 29th, we Utopia hoped for the time to haste into a new day.

And as soon as the midnight of the 30th struck in your country's Mountana, we struck that city from flying helicopters, with our weapons of mass destruction.

Our primary motive from the very beginning was Mountana City and we would go to hades to get that portion of your territory.

When we offer you the loan, we assumed we would easily get Mountana; thinking you would embezzle or mismanage the funds and wouldn't be able to pay back before the deadline.

However, you being an economist, you managed everything so well and we knew we would lose out if we

let you be. And that explained why you got the Olympic Games.

We making you host the Olympics was a way to make you spend the money you have saved up for repayment. I know you never knew we Utopia orchestrated your country hosting the games.

We wanted to be sure you wouldn't have a way out like you always do. And so, we scheduled the Olympics to hold during your rainy season.

You have been so focused and busy with the paying back the debt, that your border defenses were left weak and porous. So, coming into your territory was a piece of cake for us.

You see, money isn't everything!

Everything went according to our plan. No one plays game with us and beat us to it. No one dines with the devil and go scot-free.

Bombing Mountana was a child's play for us. They were sleeping and defenseless. Utopia might have been the one who killed your beloved Mountana. But Mountana's blood is on your hands.

By now, I believe you must have seen how far we have gone to get your Mountana; and I am sure you can imagine how far we can go to enter your country.

I am Devlyn “Fierce Courage” McCathy: do not make me more furious than I already am.

All we want is Mountana. Do not risk losing the entirety of Kimberland before you come to your senses. Politely allow us in before we tear down your walls.

Thank you as you comply for your own sakes.

Regards.

Devlyn McCathy,

Chairman & CEO, The Utopia Cooperation.

A cold, chilly wave poured on Kimberland’s first family as the stared into space. Their whole body frames shuddered uncontrollably with unspeakable fright.

In all their years in politics, they had never got such a hugely terrifying threat.

Chapter 30

IT had been two days since Mia and Teo returned from their trip to Mountana. And the duo had immediately continued with the investigation.

The investigation was work for Mia. The successful reporter personally arranged it as a fieldwork investigative journalism at her place of work.

Mia had asked her news broadcast company, VCN, to give her a month for an undercover investigation on the Mountana case.

She'd assured her superiors she had got some major leads for the big story.

The established twenty-eight-year-old reporter had asked for a little level of independence from the journalistic body in covering the high profile story.

Especially because of its sensitivity.

Mia's news company VCN had fortunately agreed to her terms.

Especially when she explained the unofficial manner the investigation would be carried out, owing to the case's political sensitivity.

But VCN didn't so much question Mia's permission to solely go undercover to investigate the story.

For the big, independent broadcast company do not care about its staff welfare as they do

about raking in a swarm of viewers. And consequently tons of adverts and revenue.

The capitalist news company would do anything to be the producer of that exclusive.

Even if it meant going by Mia's terms of allowing her cover the news with some level of independence.

And if it meant making Mia had to sign a strict undertaking that, being a staff of VCN, the media company exclusively run the huge story.

But then, setting out to investigate the administration of the president of Kimberland by two ordinary citizens somewhat seemed like a kid trying to climb up Mount Everest.

The obvious roadblock for ordinary citizens like Teo and Mia was usually inaccessibility to classified information.

The nation's official documents were not mere newspaper front page articles read and interpreted by just any Tom, Dick and Harry.

Let alone the classified top documents of the powerful Rock Castle in the capital Gardon City.

The investigation seemed a complete waste of time for the naïve team of two. The thought of investigating an incumbent president itself by these two appeared ridiculous outright.

Yet, Teo didn't see any of the obvious obstacles of the investigation.

The only thing on the young man's mind was finding evidences against his own father, the president of Kimberland.

Teo was yet to resume his regular work at his architectural company.

Although the young man had regained his health, resuming work without finding out exactly what was behind the Mountana tragedy that killed his girlfriend was rather an impossible thing.

Teo pasted a picture of President Jimi Jacobs on a white board that he'd stood on a wooden frame in his living room.

And below the picture, the young man wrote – and underlined – with a marker:

Possible Causes for Mass Death

Mia was only looking from a distance. She was sitting on the couch with a laptop on her laps.

Teo glanced at the young lady for suggestions and Mia quickly searched through the Internet on her laptop.

Teo looked a little surprised.

‘Miss Mia,’ he called, ‘if I want to look through books for answers I won’t even set out to do this in the first place. Let’s get our answers by ourselves, please.’

Mia let out a breath and reclined herself in the settee.

She lay still for a while, and then, sprang to her feet all of a sudden and walked to the board.

She yanked the marker off Teo’s hand, leaned a little forward and listed her thoughts below the young man’s written topic.

She scribbled in a hurried manner.

- War
- Natural disaster
- Epidemic
- Widespread wildfire

Mia paused, raised herself and glanced up at Teo. ‘These are what I can think of right now,’ she said.

Teo whispered with a bright smile. ‘Thank you!’

The two discussed the four points for some time. They soon came to a conclusion that the cause of the Mountana tragedy wasn’t any of the four points.

The country was obviously not in a war. The natural disaster factor had equally been ruled out from the start.

The cause also couldn't have been an epidemic – as there were literal ruins which an epidemic couldn't cause.

And lastly, if it had been a wildfire outbreak, it wouldn't have specifically mapped out inhabited areas and leave out the uninhabited parts.

The pattern the ex-city's ruins formed only attested to the assumption that the destruction was wrought by man.

Teo's question was then boxed to what could occasion a case of mass murder by someone or some people?

The duo thought for a while.

Mia soon came up with an answer.

'What if we think of it from this perspective?' she put in. 'Why exactly would the people of Mountana be murdered?'

She paused to make sure Teo was following; and she went on in a bit.

‘Look, it wasn’t two or more random cities or districts. But why was it Mountana itself? Why the people of Mountana?’

Teo folded his arms across his chest, bowed his gaze and heaved an acquiescing sigh.

Mia paced up the living room as she went on talking.

‘Look at it from this angle. Some international organisation was offering to help rebuild the city just as soon as it was ruined. It makes me question why they must be so kind or concerned?’

Teo raised his head and fixed an intent gaze at the young lady. He nodded at her in earnest agreement.

The investigative reporter went on. ‘There are many ruined cities in Iraq, Iran and Israel. And those war torn zones need to be rebuilt. But why us?’

A low grunt of frank admittance buzzed within Teo’s throat.

Mia resumed.

‘We also have earthquake and volcano torn cities in Japan, New Zealand and so on. Those places need to be rebuilt but nobody hears of an international body offering to help.

‘So, why our Mountana?!’

The smart lady of twenty-eight paused for a moment for the thoughts to sink and intensify her partner’s skeptical outlook.

Her listener now stood with arms akimbo and gazed with interest.

With some wondering and curiosity, Mia muttered to herself repeatedly. ‘Why Mountana? Why Mountana? Why Mouna...’

A sudden idea struck her mind in a moment. Mia’s face brightened up that instant.

‘It’s about the land of Mountana itself,’ she exhaled.

The young beauty and brains sprinted towards the board, picked up the marker and scribbled out a few points.

Teo saw what Mia had just scribbled out and picked up from there.

‘Yes, it’s not about the people,’ the young man agreed; ‘if it were about them in the first place, they wouldn’t have been murdered while they were sleeping.’

Teo was excited he had found the answer he’d been looking for, staring right at him.

Mia quipped at the instance. ‘The Mountana people were like an obstacle in getting at the major goal!’

Teo retorted. ‘And the larger picture is the land of Mountana itself!’

Teo paused and went on in a second.

‘Yes; that explains why the president denied that international body access into Mountana, and told the organisation we’re still in mourning.’

Mia snapped her fingers. ‘You got it; that’s it!’ she exclaimed.

Teo squinted his eyes a moment. ‘I bet the president knew the organisation was coming for the land and he didn’t want them in.’

He paused a second. ‘That’s it, Mia! You’re so on point! That’s it!’ he suddenly exuded with the thrill of discovery.

Mia instantly glanced at Teo, looking askance.

She heard him call her by name just now. Teo just addressed her informally and she found it a little awkward.

Teo was just done being excited and now he knew he’d broken through a boundary of courtesy between Mia and him.

He felt a little awkward.

He thought of what to say and decided to come clean before the awkwardness brewed rather too cold between the two.

‘Erm... erm... so sorry, Miss Mia. Didn’t intend to be... I mean, to be that... erm, impolite – yes, impolite... ahem. Was simply carried away by the excitement, you know.’

The apology was what the young beautiful needed. But now that she got it already, she felt rather too awkward herself.

Mia stuttered. ‘It’s... it’s okay. You’re... few years older than me, after all. It’s okay, sir.’

Teo knew it wasn’t okay. Calling Mia by name already seemed taking her for granted. They hadn’t gotten so close.

Teo replied in a quiet voice. ‘No, it’s not; I really don’t want to take you for granted. So, pardon me.’

Mia thought on the young dude’s warm thoughtfulness. And it made her smile.

But the young adorable now so wished that Teo called her by name.



Like the aftermath of a volcanic eruption, the first couple were still buried in shock.

Jimi and Demi Jacobs were still contemplating the big blow they'd just received from Utopia.

When Demi had earlier set out to help her husband, she'd planned to take the fight to the end.

But upon reading Utopia's email, her determination had been terribly shaken.

Yet the first lady knew she had to stand by her husband, even if the whole world was crashing down upon them.

Demi decided to pull herself together. She decided to go back to her drawing board, thinking.

Her husband the president of Kimberland and her had got less than seven days to find a way to defeat Utopia.

Or else concede to defeat and welcome the international organisation to take over Kimberland's Mountana city.

Choosing to find a way to defeat the powerful Utopia in less than seven days was like a crippled hiker racing against time to mount up Everest.

It was like a wounded hunter racing against time to gun down a pride of lions at close range.

It was an uphill task. It was grossly suicidal.

And that difficult, dangerous task was exactly the choice of Kimberland's first lady. Demi Jacobs wouldn't just concede to defeat without keeping up a fierce fight.

With much prayers and words of encouragement, Demi was able to convince her husband to fight right until the very end.

And now, the first family was back to the battlefield. It was total war against Utopia.

After a long hour of brainstorming, and like Teo and Mia, Demi also began to question why

Utopia would handpick Mountana City of all the lands in the country.

She reasoned. ‘They could have picked any other land in the country without having to kill anyone; but they chose Mountana and killed the people on the land.’

After a while, Demi stopped thinking about the people of Mountana and started to think of about the land itself.

She came to agree that the people might just be a hindrance to Utopia’s bigger plan, if they could go to the lengths of murdering the entire residents while coveting the city.

There must be something about the land she and her husband needed to find out, she admitted.



All that Teo and Mia wanted, too, was unearthing the secrets that caused the cold blood murder of the residents of the ruined Mountana City.

But then, as there was neither an archeologist nor miner among the team of two, there was no way they could uncover what lay beneath the ruins of the city.

They were at a dead end.

And one in which only someone within the powerful Rock Castle... can pave out the way forward.

Chapter 31

THE first citizen of Kimberland, along with his first lady, had only five days left. Until Utopia's seven-day ultimatum.

Five days to plan a counter attack on Utopia.

Or, to simply concede defeat and welcome the multinational organisation to take over the ex-city of Mountana.

Jimi and Demi Jacobs had buried themselves in classified official documents for the past twelve hours.

The first couple were searching through the printed confidential documents for a breakthrough discovery in the dead-end situation their enquiry had led to.

Jimi decided that they take a long break. And the couple chose to rest at their private flower garden at the villa in the Rock Castle.

At the sequestered little garden, Jimi spoke about his son Jimi Jacobs Junior. For the first time in a long time.

‘You see,’ he began, ‘I didn’t tell you this because I’ve been overwhelmed by the weight of everything happening these days.’

‘I called my son Jimi a day to the Mountana disaster. I wanted to meet with him, but he declined. He said he had some things to do at Mountana.’

‘I guess he died along with the city residents. I’ve been hopefully trying to reach him ever

since. His number goes through but no one picks up.'

Demi gasped with shock and covered her gaping mouth with a hand.

'What do you mean?' she quizzed. 'Are you saying Jimi Junior is dead? This can't be!' A teardrop appeared in the corner of her left eye.

Jimi held his wife and warmly squeezed her hand.

'I'm sorry I'm just telling you,' he went on. 'That was why I cried so much at the mass funeral on the first day of the year.'

He paused to swallow. 'I couldn't believe I found my one and only son, only to lose him to my greed and ambition!' he moaned.

Jimi's voice trembled as he spoke; and warm tears welled up in his eyes.

'Utopia has taken so much from me, Demi. No, it's not Utopia; I'm the very one at fault. I have murdered my own son with my bare hands.'

The couple held each other's hands as they cried.

It was indeed a trying time for the first family.

And they themselves were all they'd got.



Teo had been intentionally ignoring President Jimi Jacobs' calls since the Mountana incident.

At first, Teo Jimi Jacobs didn't pick the calls because he just couldn't. He was sick and was mourning his girlfriend.

But when his health was getting better and he could attend to his phone calls, he deliberately ignored his father's calls.

Teo needed somebody to blame for Foye's tragic death; and President Jacobs was the perfect target for the blame game.

Teo could pretend he didn't resent the fact that he hadn't got a father in his life all along.

He could pretend he was all right with the fact that his father hadn't known he existed then.

And he could also say he was okay with the fact that his father was not always available to meet afterwards, because of his busy schedule.

But then, being hasty to blame his father for Foye's death only attested to the fact that the young man had resented him all along.

Teo bore a deep hurt within his heart. He bore a huge grudge against the father who had never been there for him.

He disliked himself for seeking his father out, in fact.

And he couldn't forgive himself appearing unnecessarily needy to a father that wasn't worth looking for.

Even so, Teo knew the only one to unravel the mystery behind the Mountana incident was his father. President Jimi Jacobs.

Teo hated the fact that he would desperately need the man he loved to continue hating.

But he was desperate to find out why his Foye died.

It was now a battle between desperation and hatred in the battlefield of the young man's emotions.

And only time could tell which one would win.



Jimi and Demi returned to their enquiry through the files of classified documents.

In no time, Jimi came across a file that seemed to have the answer for their curious investigations.

The classified document file contained the report for a certain expedition search.

The search was for new mineral resources all around the country during a certain past president's term.

Oye appeared smart enough to bury the answer deep within the crust of time.

The research team that combed through the entire Kimberland had discovered huge deposits of diamond.

Beneath the rocky mountains of Mountana City.

And they reported back to Oye, the then Minister of Economy and Finance.

While Oye gave out a huge compensation to the expedition team, he made them sign an oath of to ‘keep the result with utmost confidentiality.’

And what the cunning gamer meant was for the research team to simply keep their findings a ‘secret.’ In the slyest sense of the word.

But then, what Oye didn’t know was that there could be a question for every answer as much as there is an answer for every question.

And a question would even unearth a buried answer in order to query it.

Jimi saw the file in which the order was given to Oye by the past president to find new the mineral resources in Kimberland.

By studying through the documents, Jimi could tell Oye eventually found something. Even though the cunning old man stated nothing was found in the entire country.

Jimi heaved a sigh of relief. He decided at the instant to get to the root of the issue and find out more.

He put calls through to the necessary quarters.

The next day, group of miners and archeologists gathered at the ruined Mountana City on President Jacob's order.

They would find out what lay beneath the ground of the ex-city.

And soon enough, Oye's secret was uncovered.

For the team found diamond ore beneath Mountana's pleasant highlands.

Chapter 31

TEO'S desperation to find out the truth behind Foye's death eventually won against his spite for his father.

Mia was frustrated at their powerlessness and at their inability to access vital information about the Mountana incidence.

She wished so much she knew the one with the highest authority in the country.

She wished she could request some sort of classified file with the very information the team of two needed.

The young lady was pacing up Teo's living room. She paused once in a while to take a look at the white board where they'd scribbled their points.

Stopping a moment, she wondered aloud. 'What is it about the land of Mountana?'

She picked herself up again and continued pacing about.

Teo sat quietly on a couch, staring at his phone in his hands.

The young man eventually decided to give his father a call. At the very least, he wanted to hear the Mountana case from the horse's mouth.

He stared on for a while; his mind occupied with the thoughts on what he'd say to his father to get the information he wanted.

Suddenly, Mia exclaimed. ‘Oh my God!’ And it was the young woman’s sudden exclamation that brought back Teo’s attention.

Teo glanced up immediately and was only now reminded that Mia had been with him all along.

He returned his attention to his phone and had his fingers frivolously fumbled with the device.

Mia spoke up. ‘I just wish I know the first man in the country! It’d be a piece of cake getting access to the most classified information!’

‘You think so too?’ Teo quipped.

Mia retorted. ‘Of course, I do. Isn’t it an obvious fact?’

Teo was now sure he could go ahead to call his father.

He turned to Mia again. ‘Okay, Miss Mia; please let’s settle down for a while. I think it’s time we call President Jimi Jacobs now.’

Mia stared at Teo with quizzical eyes. It seemed he wasn't joking around.

But she couldn't make sense of what she just heard.

Call the President of Kimberland, or what?



What Oye had kept secret about Mountana had been uncovered by Jimi Jacobs.

The president of Kimberland had now got a defense weapon; but he didn't yet know how exactly to swing the shield.

It was now crystal clear to both Jimi and Demi Jacobs that their Special Adviser to the President on budget and economic matters was a part of Utopia.

That Oye had planned the grand conspiracy from the very beginning. And was actualising his devious machinations within the framework of Utopia's mission.

Jimi paced about thinking all day. Now he'd got just three days left until Utopia's seven-day ultimatum elapsed.

Demi knew they could win against Utopia with all the evidences they'd gathered so far.

But she, too, wasn't sure of how to use the evidences against Utopia without Jimi and her getting hurt.

It struck her hard that the only way to use all the evidences they'd gathered against Utopia to give a fatal blow was for they themselves to come open to all and sundry about the Utopia loan.

It was a secret loan that had become a binding legal covenant; with a forfeit of land as its price for non-compliance.

It was a secret contract that had afterwards claimed, not just land, but the entire people of the land in gruesome cold blood murder.

It was a covenant of death that could not be appealed to any court on planet Earth.

For the evil genius that wrought that inhuman deed even held sway over the listening ears of any human court.

The Kimberland first lady reasoned that confessing about the secret Utopia loan itself, as much as it'd shock and incapacitate Utopia, wouldn't go without hurting she and her husband, too.

The first family weren't ready to take the risk. They wanted an easier way out.

While the couple were still in search of a better way to beat Utopia, Jimi's phone rang.

And it was Teo his son calling.

Jimi was surprised when he saw the caller's identity. He'd assumed Teo was dead. But now he was even confused.

But he was curious to know who the caller was. He wanted to confirm if it was really his son. And he dearly wished it was his son.

Jimi picked up the call and waited for caller to speak first.

‘Hello, it me Teo Jimi Jacobs,’ the voice resounded from the other end.

The president’s heart leaped hearing Teo’s voice. He was delighted to know his son was alive.

The older man interposed in a trembling voice. ‘Jimi, how are you? How are you, really? I’ve been trying to reach you. I’m...I’m...’

Teo cut in with a smirk. ‘Huh, you thought I was dead?’

Mia was with Teo while he made the call.

And the young lady was absolutely confused.

She was just getting over the bewilderment that Teo was going to call the president of Kimberland. Now, this too.

‘Teo Jimi Jacobs,’ she wondered quietly.

Mia had only known Teo with his first name and she’d never bothered about his full name.

But now, she was learning he even shared a name with the country's president. And the call conversation was rather so informal.

Mia looked at Teo in askance, while the young man was busy talking on phone.

'Could it be... that this man is somehow the president's son?' she thought for a while, marking Teo's gestures.

'Oh... that must be it!' she admitted frankly.

The discovery was overwhelming for Mia.

She was slowly digesting it while another thought hit her.

And this time around, it wasn't about Teo and President Jimi Jacobs. But about her.



Jimi could tell his son was angry.

Teo had many reasons to be angry; and Jimi wasn't sure which of the reasons his son was angry about.

He wanted to see Teo and before he could suggest the idea of meeting, Teo beat him to it.

‘I’m sure we have a lot to talk about,’ Teo said, his voice a little stern.

Jimi decided to be silent and listen to his angry son.

Teo went on. ‘Let’s meet where we used to. This evening. I’ll take the subway.’

Jimi made an acquiescing grunt.

‘I will be coming with my girlfriend,’ Teo added; ‘I believe you don’t mind.’

Mia was stunned at Teo’s last statement. Her belly tightened up and her heart leapt within its cavity.

What was that? Girlfriend? Was Teo asking her out, or something? She was dead sure she heard the young dude correctly.

At the other end, Jimi knew Teo wasn’t asking for his approval.

The girlfriend idea seemed out of context but Jimi was prepared to receive any verdict passed on him by his angry son.

He didn't question the idea. He just wanted to see the son he'd thought was dead. He wanted to see him happy, even if his dear son wanted to bring along his significant other.

Jimi didn't need to tell his wife about the conversation he'd just had with Teo. The call was on speaker and Demi heard everything.

And at the other end, Mia was waiting for Teo's explanation.

Chapter 33

TEO knew he had a lot to explain to Mia.

But of all the things he'd got to explain, the girlfriend issue which occupied the first place on Mia's priority list, was the very least on Teo's mind.

Mia was silent. She knew what to ask first, but she wanted to hear Teo answer on his own volition.

She only stared at the young dude with expectant eyes.

Teo spoke up. ‘My full name is Teo Jimi Jacobs. President Jimi Jacobs is my father.’

The young man paused for a while. He knew the next thing he should address was about him referring to Mia as his girlfriend.

He thought of what to say for a little bit and then he blabbed around the issue.

‘It’s... it’s not like I want you to be my girlfriend right now, or something.’

‘You know I... I just lost Foye and it sounds inappropriate to be already attracted to... I mean... it’s not like you...you erm... it’s not like that you aren’t beautiful...’

Teo realised he was sounding so stupid already.

He didn't want to go on. The more he blabbered the more obvious it was that he was already smitten by the charming girl.

He thought hard and found another excuse. His face lit up in a second.

'Yes, now I get it!' he exclaimed, snapping his fingers.

'Telling my father you're my girlfriend is the only way he as the president can trust you enough to talk to us freely, regarding what we want to know.'

He warmed up to the young beautiful with a bright smile. 'What do you think?'

But Mia had caught Teo already, and she could tell he'd absolutely fallen for her.

She decided to ignore it, though.

And she pretended to believe the young man's last excuse.



Teo arrived with Mia at the meeting point in Gardon City. It was one of President Jacob's adopted orphanages.

Teo and Mia didn't have to wait long before Jimi arrived with his wife.

When the four had settled to talk, Teo was the first to open the discussion.

'Do you know why I'm angry with you, sir?' he queried.

Jimi thought for a little bit before he spoke up. 'I'm not sure if it's what I'm thinking,' he replied, 'but I think it's because I haven't been available for you all the while.'

Teo retorted. 'Thank God you got that right!'

The young man went on.

'At first, I assumed you were busy with state work. But then, even that state work you claimed you were busy with, failed!'

‘About 800,000 lives were lost in Mountana – and my very girlfriend was there too!

‘I was planning to propose marriage to her when she’d returned. But she died in the Mountana tragedy!’

Jimi swallowed hard.

He understood Teo was angry; but he wasn’t expecting him to be that rude. He wasn’t comfortable with the manner Teo spoke. Yet he wasn’t in a position to be angry.

Jimi could understand why Teo was so angry with him. He had just lost his girlfriend.

‘I’m sorry about your loss, son; I am really sorry,’ he said.

Teo was quiet for a while. He checked the expression on his father’s face to see if he was sincere or not.

While the two men talked, Demi and Mia only sat and watched the reunion between father and son.

Mia had offered to excuse them when the two men began talking but Teo had denied her polite offer. He'd said there was nothing to hide.

Teo resumed talking after noting that his father felt enough remorse for his loss.

And now, he could dare to get him to reveal why the residents of Mountana died.

'Well, thank you, sir,' he said. 'But that's not the condolence your son needs. I want to know why Mountana residents died.'

'I want to know why my heartbeat, my Foye – why she died. I was going to ask her to marry me after years of dating, for crying out loud!

'She'd been praying and waiting for that day to come, huh! But it never came! I've even built our house to propose a life journey with it!

'So, I really want to know, Dad. Why did the people of Mountana die under your watch as the president?!'

Jimi heaved a heavy sigh and bowed his head.

He was touched and he trembled at how far reaching the Mountana tragedy was for his own son.

He wondered how much the tragic loss would mean to other millions of Kimberians.

Jimi raised his head after a while and spoke. 'It's a long story, son; and I will tell you everything,' he said.

'But before I continue,' he added, 'who is the young lady with you?'

Jimi reasoned that if Teo could know he was the president son all the while and he didn't make a ruckus with his identity by informing the ever so inquisitive media; then, Teo truly knew the essence of family.

He admitted, too, that Teo was mature enough to handle more far-reaching secrets.

But the young woman Teo brought along was what the president wasn't prepared for; with what he wanted to tell his son.

If Teo's girlfriend died in Mountana; then, who is the lady he came with?

Teo knew his father could trust him but not the stranger with him. He thought for a while before he answered his father's question.

'She is a friend,' Teo replied. 'Don't tell me you are being skeptical about her presence,' he added.

He went on in a bit. 'We already discussed family issues with her here. She knows you are my father already too. Now we are on to state issues and you are being skeptical?'

The president was rather caught off-guard. 'No, that's not,' he replied; 'I just want to be sure you don't mind her being here,' he said with a tinge of diplomacy in his words.

Teo's lips curled up in a little smile. 'Okay. Now that you're sure, Dad; can you now tell me why the people of Mountana – including my girlfriend – died?'

Jimi looked to his wife and she held his hand and nudged him on.

Jimi decided to go on and talk about everything. He decided that Utopia's secrets would no longer remain a secret.

Utopia's strengths seemed to him to lodge in the secrecy of its deals. Jimi was henceforward going to come open about every dark secret involving him with Utopia.

And dare even the consequences.

Jimi told his son everything. From his ambition to be the best leader to the desperation that led him to take a loan from Utopia.

Jimi explained the deal with Utopia and how Mountana was ruined. And how he connected the diamond issue in Mountana with the tragedy.

And how no one knew about the diamond before except his Special Adviser.

Jimi was so desperate for a turnaround that he confessed every evil deed and every dark secret.

The middle aged man concluded his account with the issue of seven-day ultimatum to allow Utopia into Mountana for a rebuild of the city.

And he showed Teo the email Utopia sent him.

By the time Jimi was concluding his story, his eyes were already filled with tears.

Teo's mountain of anger had crumbled into a vast ocean, with the sincerity in his father's words.

He knew everything was Jimi's fault. His ambition. His desperation for fame and glory. His constant negotiation with evil. Everything.

But then, seeing how remorse his father felt already, there was no need pointing out the flaw.

Teo stood up and paced about a few times.

He wasn't going to criticise his father. Rather he was thinking of a way out for the man he was angry with a while ago.

Mia had come for an exclusive but the truth behind the Mountana story she'd just heard from the president was more than she could take.

It was some grand, epic conspiracy than what she was used to hearing. It was a 21st century territory conquest she had never heard of as a news reporter.

She was dazed and dumbfounded.

Teo reasoned that, with Utopia's seven-day ultimatum, more cities could be turned to ruins if the president didn't do their bid.

And if the president did as he was ordered, it'd be a great loss for the country and injustice for the sleeping souls of Mountana.

Teo was just done thinking. He came back to his seat and spoke at length.

He began. 'Dad, a few years ago during your campaign, there was an emphasis on the fact that you are a Christian.

'Even people from other religion casted their votes for you, with the trust that a follower of Christ is always righteous.

'Kimberians trusted Christ in you and casted their hopes on you to lead them well.'

He paused a moment and went on.

‘I am not going to blame nor judge you, Dad. I’m sure you know your faults already. What I will advise you to do is to go back to the basis. Back to who you were.’

Jimi nodded with a quiet sigh.

Teo continued. ‘You have to confess to the whole nation, Dad. You have sinned against Heaven and against them – just like the prodigal son told his father.

‘I’m glad you’ve confessed to God and your wife. But you haven’t found a way out of the quagmire only because you haven’t reconciled with the people you traded for glory.’

Jimi heaved a sigh.

Teo went on. ‘And that’s why the Bible says, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” That’s Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 13.’

Teo sat up. ‘You see,’ he continued, ‘like the Lord Jesus said, you can’t have a plank in your eyes and try to remove a speck in another person’s eyes.’

‘That means that you can’t effectively expose Utopia’s evil to the world, if you yourself aren’t ready to confess your misdeed that started everything!’

Jimi acquiesced with a slight grunt. He knew his son was absolutely right.

Teo spoke on.

‘As for that binding contract with that monstrous devil organisation, God Himself has said something about your deliverance, Dad. We only have to prayerfully claim it.’

Jimi was eager to know what it was.

Teo brought out a pocket Bible from his handbag and leafed through its pages. ‘I’m reading from Isaiah chapter 49 and verses 24 through 25,’ he said.

Teo went on. ‘It reads, Dad: “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?

“But thus says the LORD: ‘Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away; and the prey of the terrible be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children.’”

Both Jimi and Demi let out a deep breath. ‘Thank God!’ they muttered.

They were both grateful for such a great promise.

‘More so, Dad,’ Teo went on, ‘God’s word says in Isaiah 28 and verse 18 that the “covenant with death shall be annulled”, and the “agreement with hades will not stand.”’

Jimi continued to listen quietly to his son speak.

‘Dad,’ Teo went on, ‘when you pray fervently, confess your deal with Utopia and expose them, that monster organisation will lose its grip on you.’

‘Utopia has killed the people of Mountana already, there’s no reason why we should allow that devil to lay further claim on Mountana City.

‘But if you continue to hide your sin, you will continue to be Utopia’s legal slave. Because along with your sins, you will be hiding theirs too!’

Teo sat up. ‘Mum once told me the story of grandma’s duck when I was boy.

‘I was always defensive and lied whenever I was questioned about my stealing meat in the pot of soup.

‘So, mum told me the story one night. And that ended my defensive habit.’

Teo paused for a moment, looked into his father’s keen eyes and began to tell the story.

Chapter 34

JIMI Jacobs, along with Demi and Mia, sat quietly in the meet room, and listened to Teo narrate his tale.

A tale his mother told him as a child.

‘There was a little boy named Jaja,’ Teo began. ‘Jaja owned a little catapult and he always loved to play with it.’

‘One day, he shot a stone at a distance. Grandmother’s lovely duck was mistakenly hit by Jaja’s shot and the duck died at the instant.

‘His kid brother Mafo saw what he did. And because he disliked Jaja, he went ahead to blackmail him with his secret.

‘Mafo told his big brother that he’d keep his secret safe with him only if Jaja started to combine his house chores with his.

‘Jaja the big brother had to agree to do all the chores together. He didn’t want to lose face with grandmother, after all.

‘Pity, Jaja began to slave himself for his kid brother. He sadly bore all the tiresome chores alone, to make up for killing grandmother’s duck.

‘Soon, Mafo started to demand for Jaja’s dinners, too.

‘But whenever Jaja wanted to protest, Mafo would sternly remind him right then that he could tell their grandmother what he did.’

‘Jaja reluctantly sacrificed his dinner. And every night the little boy went to bed hungry.’

‘One fateful morning, Mafo demanded for Jaja’s breakfast, too. But the oppressed little boy was tired of slaving away, with loads of guilt and dread.

‘Jaja decided to confess his sin to his grandmother.

‘To the little boy’s surprise, Grandmother already knew about what happened all along. She had only been waiting for Jaja to come confess it.

‘So he could be free him from the tiresome slavery the boy had subjected himself to.’

Teo’s tale resonated with everyone’s heart as everyone seated heaved a thoughtful sigh.

‘Dad,’ Teo went on, ‘God knows your sin already and He is waiting for you to confess them.

‘You already said the major principle of that organisation is secrecy. You see, they are like

Mafo – they hold your secrets and threaten you with them exposing you.

‘If you yourself don’t come clean to your people, the slavery those Mafos subject you to, will only get terribly worse.

‘They would keep blackmailing you till you even surrender your entire territory.’

Jimi let out a deep breath. He knew his son was right in every way.

But then, coming out to tell the whole nation he had a hand in the Mountana tragedy was a difficult thing to do.

Jimi buried his head in his hands. He was tired and scared. Every word Teo had said had sunk in his mind.

There was a moment’s silence. After which the first lady spoke.

‘Thank you so much for your words, Teo,’ she said.

‘What you are suggesting is a serious thing. I feel my husband and I need to talk about some things. So, I hope you two don’t mind excusing us for a while?’

Teo and Mia obliged. And the two took a walk around the orphanage.



The first couple were now left alone in the meet room.

Demi stood up from her armchair beside her husband. She drew a wooden chair closer and sat facing him.

‘Jimi,’ she began, ‘I know your son’s suggestion doesn’t sound pleasant to your ears. But that is the only solution I can think of myself.’

‘I have only been consumed with the idea of beating Utopia all the while, that I have forgotten we owe the people some explanation.’

‘We owe the people our confession. And the good news is that it is a sure way to beat Utopia.’

Let's stop this futile race and confess our sin, Jimi.'

She leaned a little forward.

'You see, when David sinned and he was to choose between two options of punishment, he chose falling into the hand of God rather than fall into the hand of man. He said, "Because God's mercies are great."

'That's 2nd Samuel chapter 24 and verse 14.'

Jimi acquiesced with a quiet sigh.

'We don't want to be punished by the crueler Utopia than by our own people,' Demi finished.

Jimi's eyes were moist. He was broken all the way; and his voice trembled when he spoke.

'I've been miserable ever since I signed the Utopia deal,' he said. 'I embarked on a competitive race against what I can't win. I have lost the battles even before I began.'

‘Now more than anything, I am tired of the bondage and really want to get away from their clutches.’

He swallowed.

‘And if coming out open in a sincere confession is what will free me from Utopia’s hold, then I am absolutely ready,’ he finished.

While Jimi and Demi were having their private talk, Teo and Mia were discussing what the next step would be if the president agreed to confess to the people.

And the younger two were soon beckoned in.



It was now the sixth day since Utopia gave its seven-day ultimatum.

Oye was dead sure everything would work according to plan.

He could still remember the look on President Jimi Jacob’s face when he showed him the news articles.

He smiled to himself and muttered. ‘Now, he knows it’s dangerous to play with fire!’

Oye glanced at the calendar. ‘Just a day more and Mountana will be mine,’ he grinned.

The old man was still basking in the ecstasy of his dreams when his phone rang.

The call was from the Utopia CEO. Devlyn McCarthy.

Oye picked up.

‘What have you been doing?’ the voice bellowed from the other end. ‘Can you explain what’s going on at the moment, huh?!’

Oye was entirely lost; he didn’t know what Devlyn was talking about.

‘What... what exactly, sir?’ he replied in a stammer. ‘I... I don’t seem to get what you’re talking about now, sir.’

Devlyn was dead furious. ‘Hey! Don’t you have a TV?’ he yelled into Oye’s eardrum and hanged up.

Oye rushed to grab the remote control on his desk turned on the TV.

What he saw was utterly shocking.

It was President Jimi Jacobs having an exclusive interview with Mia; and in which he made everything bare.

Everything about the Utopia deal. About the Mountana case. And about the monstrous organisation itself.

He exposed everything about Utopia and the reason why they wanted Mountana.

He announced the diamond ore discovered in Mountana. He also let the people know it was why the financial group wasted the inhabitants of the land.

Jimi confessed his crime of secretly getting past the Senate to obtain a loan. And told how he failed to be transparent to the people that voted him in.

The email Utopia had sent to Jimi was televised as evidence that the organisation was the one behind the Mountana tragedy.

Oye knew Jimi was witty and smart. But he couldn't believe Jimi could sacrifice himself to save the country from Utopia's hands.

The old man couldn't believe the president would be ready to risk being burnt just so he could raze down the mighty monster.

Both Oye and Utopia were prepared for everything but not for Jimi's confession.

Oye was shocked and terrified beyond words.

It was indeed a huge blow.

Oye was even more shocked and devastated that the diamond he'd slaved himself to keep hidden for years had eventually come to everyone's knowledge.

The diamond he had secretly labored to keep was now going to the nation's hand in his lifetime.

The shock was too much for Oye's fast beating heart to contain. The news shook him up and shattered him to pieces.

For he came crumbling down to the floor with a lifetime stroke and paralysis.

Rather than Kimberians being entirely furious and vengeful with their president, they poured out their indignations against Utopia for its grand conspiracy.

Even though Kimberland's beloved President J. J. wasn't entirely pardoned for his part in the Utopia deal.

Jimi announced in the exclusive that he had decided to resign from his position as the president and from politics altogether.

As a pay for his crime and his sins.

The announcement of the resignation had doused the people's anger for their president to a great extent.

And Jimi vowed to get everything resolved before he'd resign.

But then, the beloved president didn't need to do anything else; as the already exposed Utopia gave up on Kimberland, overlooking the loan and the land.

The devilish organisation sadly admitted that any further insistence on coming into Kimberland would confirm every accusation and allegation against it.

It would also ruin its plans with other gullible nations it had given loan to and entirely ruin its mission altogether.

More so, it could also be dragged to an international court of law for war crime; and eventually not have sufficient chance of winning.

It had to give up its grip on Kimberland.

Utopia had a lot in their cup already.

It was already receiving emails and calls from the press as well as world organisations concerning the havoc they'd wrecked in Kimberland.

Even if it would eventually dribble its way out of the looming trouble with its power and influence, the financial organisation knew the journey would be a long and stressful ordeal.

Kimberians were united on the stand that, since Utopia couldn't be arrested or tried by their nation, the inside link had to bear the grunt.

Dr Oye was arrested in spite of his state of health and was tried and imprisoned for his crimes.

The president wasn't left out of the punishment, either.

For after Jimi Jacobs had ensured the country was completely free from Utopia's clutches, he resigned from his post as the president and was tried for his crime according to the rule of law.

The crime of the misuse of power as the president by taking loan in the country's name without the due official process.

Jimi was sentenced to a six-month imprisonment.

The ex-president was lighthearted as the burden and guilt he'd carried over the years were rolled off his shoulder.

He was happy to receive his punishment.

He had lost the huge dreams and ambitions he'd garnered over the years.

Only to gain back what he'd lost while he was chasing after shadows. The heavenly Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He was ready to face everything – even six months in prison – with Jesus Christ being absolutely with him, in him, and for him.

He glanced at his wife for the last time before he was ushered into the black prison van.

‘Demi,’ he whispered, ‘my heart has been reconquered by Jesus Christ! I am absolutely back.’

Demi's eyes were wet with tears for her hero.

‘My J. J.,’ she whispered back. ‘I'm so proud you're my man; I love you, darling.’

Teo and Mia watched as Jimi was driven away in the van.

Teo heaved a sigh and muttered. ‘He will be fine.’

Mia knew Teo’s expression was both a question and a statement. ‘Of course, he will,’ she quipped.

Just as the two decided to leave in Teo’s car, the young charming dude gazed at Mia for a moment. He couldn’t help but smile at her.

Mia couldn’t hold it. ‘What?’ she chuckled; her face a radiant shine.

Teo gazed on for a second, reached out his hand and clasped her hand in his.

Mia knew this was oncoming, but she never expected it to be here.

And she quietly swallowed the desire to ask ‘What?’ this time around.

For she could tell what it was.

THE END



Èṣù kò lè fún ni l'óókan kó má f'èédé gbà á.

*The Devil will give nothing unless he's got a thousand to
take instead.*

—**Yorùbá Saying**



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DRAGONGOD

"She just looked so darn cute and kissable!"

"If I die tomorrow by poisoning, don't bother informing the police to investigate who killed me. You know him, don't you?"

"You're asking the wrong question. You don't think what you should've asked me was why I came to you?"

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