

# dis COVE ry

“Life is full of questions... and hidden answers.”



You have been so focused and busy with paying back the debt, that your border defenses were left weak and porous. Everything went according to our plan. No one dines with the devil and go scot-free.

The windowpane through which you peer at God's Almightyness is stained with pride and a haughty feeling of entitlement. And no matter how hard you look, you can't see Him right.

As Tai VeShadd sadly had his way with the woman, the young man metamorphosed in Beya's perception within a microsecond. From a celestial star. To a lowly mortal. And to a degenerate beast.

*Feel free to share with friends!*

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“Life is full of questions... and hidden answers.”

KT OLLA'S  
**Discovery**

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An Anthology of Thought-Provoking Stories  
from Great Novels on [ktolla.com](http://ktolla.com)

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## Discovery

A Cedars of Lebanon eBook

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# Preface

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*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with  
God, and the Word was God.*

*(John 1:1)*

**FROM the tracks of history, we** see how many unforgettable battles were simply ignited by words. And words were equally the starting points for love and peace.

There have been words which evoked superior imaginations in our minds. Words which provoked deeper thoughts. And words that couldn't but stir us to action.

Yet there hasn't been such a perfectly glorious word like the one living Word. Jesus Christ the Lord of all.

Even those who heard Him two millennia ago marvelled at the flaming fire His lips kindled.

*Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us? (Luke 24:32, Good News Bible)*

On the 24th day of November 2020, it clocks a year since we launched out on this particular mission with creative words on ktolla.com, in obedience to the call of our Lord and Master.

We are gratefully marking one year of us proclaiming the power of Christ through free novels.

In the past one year of our launch, God has miraculously equipped and strengthened us in writing and releasing four original novels both as free web series and as free eBook – and along with short stories and poems.

We are more than humbled and equally grateful for His fabulous work through us. And we thank you our readers for trusting God's message through our humble hands.

As we mark one year in this beautiful journey with you through God, we have gathered some powerful, thought provoking plots from three of our masterpieces.

We are praying that these golden words and scenarios from our novels will point both you and us to the Living Word even more.

To redemption, righteousness, surrender... and a richly fulfilling life.

*With love from us to you*

**Kayode & Tola Olla**

*Nov 2020*



# Part I

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## — The Conqueror —

This entire section is culled from **Kayode Olla's *Reconquered***, a political thriller novel, p. 282 – 293, 340 – 353, 404 – 418. Published by Garlaxis Media, Mar 2020.

## DISCOVERY

## Heavily Burdened

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**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.

## Games with the Devil

---

**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.

## There's a Freedom Beyond Freedom

---

**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.

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*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**

## Part II

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### — Foul —

This entire section is culled from **Kayode & Tola Olla's *Penalty***, a sports thriller novel, p. 76 – 92, 124 – 157, 283 – 290, 298 – 305. Published by Cedars of Lebanon, July 2020.

Available as free eBook on **ktolla.com**.

## DISCOVERY

## A Tiny Flaw

---

**VESHADD'S temper was like the waves and tides of the sea.**

It was the calm blue sea that every once in a while gets mad and furious beyond what the world itself can handle.

The young dude wasn't a man of many words.

But then, all the energy the young sportsman usually saved up by talking less was sooner or later burned up in a fiery moment of unquenchable temper!

His passions were the burning leaves of a dried tree that are ferociously swayed by the winds in a thick dried forest.

It spread within moments through the capillaries of his hot blooded body.

Like some outraged wildfire.

But Tai VeShadd always excused his anger problem.

‘Why does everyone make it sound so serious?’ he’d wonder. ‘It’s commonplace anger. Who doesn’t get angry and break things, uh?’

At some other times, the young sportsman would simply resort to justifying his debilitating weakness.

‘Have I ever said I’m an angel?’ he’d blurted. ‘So you don’t expect me to be perfect. Everyone’s got one weakness or the other after all!’

When Tai VeShadd was about fifteen, and was at the football academy, he was to be expelled from the academy due to issues arising from his temper.

As a goalkeeper in training, VeShadd always picked a fight with his team's strikers far off on the pitch.

He did that every time the opponent scored a goal at his own post. Instead of finding fault with himself, or at least his defenders. If he was going to blame anyone at all.

VeShadd was a super calculative perfectionist when it came to football.

He couldn't take the moment a striker lost a good opportunity to score a goal at the opponent's post.

He knew in his calculative sense that the lost opportunity would automatically flip the golden chance towards the opponent's side...

And with a more ferocious, more determined vigor; so much neither him nor his defenders would be able to stop the savage shot heading right into his net.

No one in the football academy was able to make friend with the fifteen-year-old boy.

Everyone found him odd and unsociable. Except for Staka.

And it was his close friend Staka who helped manage VeShadd's violent passions as well as his social relation in the academy.

Fifteen-year-old Staka would appeal to his friend to apologise when he was wrong after explaining his fault to him.

VeShadd wouldn't listen to anyone but he listened to Staka in whatever he asked him to do.

And the young dude began to rely more on his friend to manage his temper for him.

Staka was an excellent midfielder.

The young sportsman was nicknamed Pipeline by his teammates...

Owing to his mastered skill of getting possession of the ball at a difficult time and then making a strategic pass to the right player.

Staka was the midfielder that got to manage the match from beginning to end.

The skilled footballer soon launched his career. And it wasn't long that his skill placed him on a high bidding table in the transfer market.

In the football world where almost every trainee player wanted to be a striker, it was difficult to find a midfielder on the pitch who'd be Staka-good.

The deal was soon settled and the talented footballer prepared to transfer to another club.

VeShadd was sad and he didn't know what he'd do if his best friend wasn't there to help him suppress his weakness.

It was then that it occurred to Staka he hadn't talked to his friend about the way out.



**Staka observed that VeShadd took** his ill temper to merely be a habit.

‘Anger isn’t just a habit, Vee,’ Staka objected, looking into VeShadd’s eyes where they sat. ‘It’s a serious weakness that can lead to even more serious sins,’ he explained.

‘Hmm, I see!’ VeShadd mocked, as he punched at his mobile phone with relaxed fingers.

Staka knew his friend wasn’t taking him serious. He knew his words were more like a joke to him.

Staka decided to have a thorough conversation with his friend. His eyes lingered on VeShadd when he asked something different, just out of the blues.

‘Hey, Vee. D’ you know why the devil fought for the dead body of Moses – despite how hard he’d laboured for God during his life? As Jude verse 9 has it.’

VeShadd glanced at his friend; stunned for a second. And then, he chuckled.

‘Don’t take the devil too serious, Staka’ he said. ‘You know he’s a thief; so, he trying to steal

the body of Moses was just him proving his nature.'

He paused a second. 'Besides, what else will Satan fight over if not the body of a godly man, like that of Moses?'

Staka resumed. 'So, have you ever wondered why Moses in the Bible kept being tempted with anger at different times in his life?'

'From when he angrily killed an Egyptian in a fight up till when he struck the Rock in anger.'

VeShadd was still for a bit as he raised head and listened a moment.

Staka went on. 'The devil noticed Moses had a terrible temper and he kept hammering at that weak spot, using the Israelites to get him agitated often.'

'And that's so he'd just do something that could make God run out of patience with him.'

'But Moses only suppressed his weakness for so long. It wasn't dealt with at all.'

‘So, sooner than later, the weakness cost Moses an entrance into the Promise Land!’

VeShadd bowed his head over his mobile phone as his fingers resumed fumbling with the device.

‘If you simply tell me anger can hinder my progress,’ he interposed, ‘then I will be fine. You don’t have to make everything spiritual. It should just be a moral thing; you know?’

Staka nodded. ‘That’s why I asked you the first question which we’re yet to address.’

‘Satan didn’t come to steal the body of Moses like you said. He fiercely fought over the body because he had some claim over it.’

‘And that explains why the only way Michael the Archangel could win over Moses’s body was by saying, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan!”’

‘You see, Vee, there was no other justification that God’s Archangel could raise for a body that was subjected to anger and even terminated by it.’

‘Satan had a claim over a body that’d been dominated and terminated by the sinful nature.’

‘So, there was nothing else the Angel could save Moses with except only the intervention of God Himself.’

Staka’s words did hit right into VeShadd’s heart.

As a committed Christian himself, VeShadd had read the life of Moses from birth to death. But he hadn’t ever seen Moses from the perspective Staka was presenting it.

His friend’s explanation seemed to be born out of some divine revelation on God’s word.

VeShadd sat up and tossed his phone beside him. He decided to listen to his friend.

‘So you are saying weaknesses can destroy us even as Christians?’ he enquired.

Staka nodded. ‘Yes... they are what the Bible calls “besetting sins,” or “works of the flesh”.’

VeShadd wasn’t satisfied yet.

‘But isn’t the soul what we really need to care about?’ he asked. ‘Didn’t the Bible say we

shouldn't fear or worry about those who can kill the body but can't kill the soul?'

Staka smiled. 'You have your answer already, Vee...

'It's true our souls are of more importance than our body. Yet if the body weren't of any significance, would God have sent Michael to fight for the body of Moses, uh?

'It was that body that became a spiritual one and appeared in the company of Elijah at the Mount of Transfiguration.

'My point is: what we do while we are in this body matters a whole lot and decides our spiritual state. Or else, the Bible wouldn't have said that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.'

VeShadd nodded in agreement.

'So, how can someone be free from the weaknesses of the flesh?' he asked with interest.

Staka resumed. 'I learnt from the Bible that God uses "fire" to free the soul from besetting

weaknesses – as raw gold is refined with fire and made strong and pure.

‘And through the Bible, there are two types of fire which God uses to refine people.

‘The first isn’t so palatable. It is described as the fire of affliction.

‘It was the case with the Biblical Job. He was guilty of self-righteousness and arrogance. They were his second nature and they sieved through his conversations and even his prayers and sacrifices.

‘But God taught Job humility by taking him through a fiery trial. And by the time he came out of fire of affliction, he became an epitome of humility.’

Staka nodded at his friend. ‘I’m sure you know Job’s story.’

VeShadd replied. ‘Of course I do.’ He added. ‘Now, are you saying God will allow the devil to take me through a sad event to break me down? Just so I can overcome my weakness!’

Staka was expecting that sort of line from his friend.

‘Vee, Vee, Vee!’ he chuckled. ‘I’m happy you don’t want to go through that unpleasant fiery trial,’ he continued. ‘And that’s why God provides the second way out. The fire of the Holy Spirit.’

‘You see, the fire of the Holy Spirit sanctifies a saved soul and frees it from the weaknesses.’

‘Satan noticed Peter’s weakness was fear when Jesus called him to walk on water and he eventually succumbed to fear.’

‘That was why, when the Devil wanted to make Peter fail, he went for his weakness.’

‘And Peter feared again and denied Jesus. But then, Jesus prayed for him and gave him a second chance.’

‘So, when the fire of the Holy Spirit fell on Peter at the upper room, it so burned his weakness that the Bible emphatically noted that Peter became so bold afterwards.’

Staka glanced at his friend. ‘You must have read Ben Carson’s story in *Gifted Hands*,’ he said.

VeShadd nodded in agreement.

Staka continued. ‘You’ll remember how Ben Carson got over the weakness of anger as a boy. Something that could have sent him to jail for murder.

‘He was furious and stabbed another boy so forcefully with his pen knife. Only for the knife to be stopped and broken by the boy’s large belt buckle.

‘And it dawned on Ben that fateful day that he would have killed someone and rot in jail, if not for God. And so, he ran home and locked himself up in his bedroom.

‘He prayed fervently to God to liberate him from his weakness right there and then. He said he wouldn’t step out of his room until God had absolutely got rid of his temper.

‘And it was until he knew for certain that God had completely taken away that he ended his prayers.’

‘Ben Carson grew up as a calm and composed neurosurgeon afterwards. And someone so cool and peaceful that his medical colleagues nicknamed him ‘Gentle Ben’!

‘You know, Jacob in the Bible was also adamant with God until his weakness was dealt with. He wrestled with God till God touched him – and the schemer became a God-dependent soul!’

VeShadd understood everything his friend had been talking about. He knew he had to pray desperately like Staka had explained.

But then, the fervent prayers seemed too much of a task for the busy sportsman.

The mountainous idea of a desperate prayer soon weakened the issue in VeShadd’s mind. And the sportsman was soon to go back to his initial conviction.

VeShadd soon felt there was no way common anger could be a massive problem in the future. Since he couldn’t ever even involve himself in a street fight, to say the least.

But what VeShadd didn't know was that Staka's words were a burning foreshadow.

A foreshadow of things he'd never be able to handle.



**After Staka's departure from the football academy,** the academy manager wouldn't give VeShadd the opportunity to launch out his carrier.

For he disliked him for his temper.

VeShadd tried to put up with the whole thing at first.

But when the sportsman saw younger footballers who'd joined the academy after him launching their carriers, he knew the delay in his launch was intentional.

The young footballer saw there was no hope for him launching out as a goalkeeper from the academy.

And by the time he was sixteen plus, VeShadd left the academy overseas and went back to his country Quitalia in North Africa.

He was desperate to do just anything football now. Whether join a local club there, or just find any sports job available.

But then, fortune smiled on VeShadd as he got a piece of good news one lovely evening.

It was a news piece that woke up his career from coma.

## Look What You've Done to Me

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**IT had been three days since Beya Jan'il's** parents had been at the Planetario Hotels, tending to their unconscious daughter hospitalized in Suite 701.

The hotel room was Tai VeShadd's, and which he recently vacated since the crime incident.

The nineteen-year-old Beya lay in coma on the king sized hotel bed; a broad strip of bandage wound around her little head.

At the head of the patient's head stood a huge surgical lighting equipment, which appeared to have been used during an emergency brain surgery given Beya immediately after the crime incident.

Beside the operating lights stood an unused medical ventilator, that appeared to have been used and done with at the time of the emergency procedure.

The mighty World Union itself had successfully turned a crime scene into a cover-up surgery...

An executive hotel room into an exclusive hospital room...

And a victimized person into a vegetative patient.

Barrister and Engineer Jan'il had both been made to sign documents involving an oath of secrecy, in exchange for access to their hopelessly sleeping daughter.

They were coerced by the powerful World Union into signing the agreement that they weren't going to sue or blow up the issue in any way at all.

Yet, the anxious, desperate parents had got to sign the documents of coercion without blinking. Just so they could see their poor teenage child and be by her side.

Mrs Jan'il, a civil engineer, had been by the sickbed, nursing her daughter while crying day in, day out.

Her husband had also been anxious and restless since they came to stay by their only daughter.

Barrister Jan'il was a renowned and accomplished human rights lawyer in Quitalia.

But he couldn't believe that while the rights of his only daughter was being trampled on mercilessly, he was entirely powerless both as a good father and as a lawyer who had never lost a case.

All the barrister could do was to sign the issue away even before it ever became a case.

It was the wisest decision to make as a father. The only choice he could make to save his only daughter.

It was a total shame to his career as a human rights lawyer and to his position as a father.

His family was being shattered into potsherds before his very own eyes and his hands were tied that he couldn't do anything about it.

That night as he sat back in a couch in the executive hotel suite, he became absolutely frustrated with the status quo.

The man watched his wife as she cried her eyes out.

And for the first time, he remembered how fragile his wife's mental health was. For she battled clinical depression.

Beya's mum could crash down into a crisis if she kept crying all day. Mr Jan'il couldn't afford to lose his precious wife at the same time.

Mr Jan'il picked himself up and walked to his wife's side.

‘Darling,’ he called in a soft voice, turning to his wife. ‘You know Beya is a strong girl, right? She’ll absolutely get through this...’

‘Let’s be strong for her too, darling. She’s only taking a nap from everything stressful and she’ll wake up soon enough, dear. Believe me!’

‘We can only take care of Beya when we ourselves aren’t breaking down, you know. Beya won’t like to see you have a crisis at such a critical time as this, uh?’

‘So, my dear, you need to freshen up first, eat good food and rest a little. That way, we’ll be coming back with a clearer head to nurse our precious daughter back to life!’

Mr Jan’il finished with a nod. ‘I can assure you that!’

Mrs Jan’il broke into tears at those touching words of encouragement. Her husband gave her a roll of tissue to dab her tears and he patted her on the back.

After a moment, the couple waved their daughter a see-you-soon bye.



**Tai VeShadd turned the last corner** as he approached Suite 701.

He saw the couple leaving the suite, lightly closing the door behind them.

He quickly judged the adults to be Beya's parents.

The young dude halted in his pace at once, turned his back on the two adults, placed his phone to his ear and acted as though he was receiving a call.

He let the parents pass by without making himself noticeable.

And when the two had gone out of sight, VeShadd walked stealthily to the hotel room and closed the door behind him.

His eyes bulged out when he saw Beya still unconscious. He was dazed as he saw his concealed crime embodied right before him.

VeShadd walked closer and stood by the bedside, staring at Beya's helpless frame.

He was lost of words. He didn't know what to do or say.

VeShadd bowed himself to touch the sleeping soul and called with a trembling, sober voice.

'Beya! Beya!'

When Beya couldn't reply a word, the situation dawned on the young, accomplished sportsman.

He staggered a few steps back; his mouth gaping wide with shock.

He held a hand to the wall to stabilise himself. And then, he sat on a seat by the bedside as tears formed in his eyes.

'I'm really sorry, Beya,' he began in a low, trembling voice. 'I'm terribly sorry I did this to you!'

'You really just liked me unreservedly but I foolishly thought I can pay you back for doting on me.'

‘I thought I should pay you back, but all I could think of to appreciate you with was something so cheap and selfish.

‘I don’t know why you picked me of many superstars. I don’t know why you’d create the fan club and gave a dark, unsociable life a colourful light.

‘All I can do in life is play football. But you suddenly appeared and gave me dreams of love and friendship. I began to smile thanks to you, Beya!

‘So, I thought I should hold on to you at all cost. I thought I should repay you for giving my life some real brightness.

‘I thought I should love you. I thought I should date you. I thought I should have you.’

He looked at Beya, shook his head in sorrow and sighed.

He went on in a moment. ‘I wanted to treat you like a woman for how you adored me.

‘The feelings weren’t just there so I put in more effort. But I only ended up hurting you!

‘Ah, I’m so sorry for everything, Beya! I’m sorry for misinterpreting your admiration for me as you wanting me whole!’

‘I’m sorry for getting the wrong idea about it eventually, and thinking you can only be craving to have me with that sort of liking!’

‘I thought you must really find me irresistible. Ah, I must have been sick to have that kind of thought!’

He paused to swallow and went on in a bit.

‘I’d thought dating you was the good thing I could do to appreciate you. But when you knew my intention and turned me down, I felt so really small!’

‘I felt humiliated and ashamed. But rather than apologise, I got really, really angry.’

‘Ah I’m so sorry for being a monster, Beya! I’m so terribly sorry for hurting you!’

Tears rolled down VeShadd’s face.

The feeling of guilt enveloped the young dude and the only way he could let it out was to let the tears roll.

He gazed at Beya for a while. And he could see a stream of tear roll down the corner of her eyes, and down her temple.

He took out his hankie, leaned closer to the sleeping beauty and wiped her subconscious tears.

‘Aw... so sorry, Beya,’ he whispered, ruefully. ‘I’m really so sorry!’

While VeShadd gazed at his number one fan’s closed, lifeless eyes, his own mind travelled down the memory pathway.

To the incident that happened that fateful night of the crime.

## A Road with Many Turns

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**THE night of the crime incident,** Beya had followed after Quitalia's national team as their bus headed back to the Planetario Hotels.

It was after the opening match of the ongoing World Cup hosted in Quitalia...

And in which the successful Tai VeShadd caught the world's glorious attention again – with a fantabulous, record breaking goal.

Beya followed behind to take closer shots of VeShadd.

She was going to share the exclusive photos to the other fans at VeShadd's fan club which she created.

When the footballers eventually arrived at the five-star hotel, Beya rushed up close to the them as they jumped down from the huge bus and walked into the hotel.

The energetic captured the animated moment in several shots, with the peculiar gleeful smiles in Tai VeShadd's face.

As the footballers went out of sight, the nineteen-year-old girl sat down on a seat pavement outside the hotel skyscraper and scrolled through the pictures on her camera.

She gazed at VeShadd's celestial smile she was able to capture. And she felt so great and fulfilled.

She dearly wished to show this peculiar pictures to VeShadd himself, but it was already about a few minutes past eleven that night.

She looked around and noted how fully lit up and lively everywhere was.

The executive hotel knew no night at all, she assured herself.

For she desperately needed to show his idol how she'd captured those gorgeous smiles of victory.

She thought to try, and she brought out her phone.

She texted VeShadd.

*I really got your best shot today. Just now when you were entering the hotel.*

*You had a great big smile in the shots I took like you've never had before! I guess the winning goal you scored must've been thrilling for you.*

*Big congrats to you!*

VeShadd saw the text immediately it was sent. He was so curious to see what the pictures looked like.

A call came in on Beya's phone immediately.

And it was VeShadd.

Beya didn't know when she jumped on her feet. She was absolutely delighted that the ace footballer called back.

'Hello!' she whispered.

'Hey,' VeShadd called, 'are you still around the hotel premises?'

Beya excitedly hummed a yes. 'Uh-oh.'

'Can I take a look at the pictures. I like to pick the ones you'll be sharing this time around.'

'Okay,' Beya retorted.

'Meanwhile,' VeShadd continued, 'there's a party just starting here but I won't be staying.'

'I'll go leave the keys to my suite at the reception now and inform them you'll come for it in about five minutes. You can make it, right?'

‘Uh-oh,’ Beya hummed.

VeShadd went on. ‘You’ll just wait for me in the room for a bit while I just show my face at the party.’

He finished. ‘I won’t take long in join you at all. So we can talk while I check through the pictures.’

Beya replied. ‘That’s okay.’

Soon enough, Beya got the keys at the reception and waited for VeShadd in his hotel room.

The twenty-year-old ace footballer eventually arrived after quite a while.

‘I’m so sorry I’m late,’ he said as he walked into the hotel room.

‘I thought it won’t be good if I don’t appear at the party at all,’ he explained. ‘So I stayed for a bit till we clinked our wine glasses. I hope you didn’t wait for so long.’

Beya got up to receive him.

‘I just arrived actually,’ she said, trying not to make VeShadd feel bad about keeping her waiting.

‘In any case,’ she added with a smile as she spun herself around, ‘I’ve been spending time since I came in, exploring the executive suite occupied by the world’s best goalkeeper!’

‘Oh come on!’ VeShadd chuckled, brushing her arm with a hand.

Beya went on with a thrill in her voice.

‘And now I’m thinking of being a footballer myself,’ she joked. ‘Just if this sort of hotel room will be part of my fringe benefits!’

VeShadd burst into laughter. And Beya joined laughing.

‘Oh my,’ VeShadd chuckled, ‘you always bring out that laughing side of me, honestly!’

‘Oh, that reminds me,’ he quipped as he took a seat in a settee; ‘you brought the pictures in which I really smiled, right?’

‘Yep,’ Beya retorted as she sat beside him and took out her phone tablet. ‘I’ll show you now.’

‘You see,’ VeShadd interposed, ‘ever since I started my career, the sports media have never been able to capture my smile.’

‘Even when I celebrate scoring a rare goal as a goalkeeper, they still don’t capture me smiling at all! I guess they aren’t as good as you.’

Beya smiled. ‘No, they’re good. They only couldn’t capture your smile simply because you hardly ever smile.’

VeShadd chuckled. ‘Oh, it’s that so?’

‘Uh-oh,’ Beya hummed.

‘Anyway,’ VeShadd interposed, ‘I’ll still congratulate you for the milestone you achieved.’

VeShadd stretched a hand to her. ‘So, congratulations for being able to capture the most expensive smile in the world!’ he gleamed.

Beya met VeShadd’s stretched hand with her tablet instead.

‘Why not take a look at the pictures first, uh? You can take the time and check them out one after another.’

VeShadd took the tablet from Beya and started scrolling through the pictures.

The sportsman was absolutely impressed. ‘Wow,’ he gasped, the pictures are so gorgeous!’

‘Yeah, ’cause the man in them is so, so gorgeous,’ Beya quipped with a beautiful smile.

VeShadd glanced at her and caught her enchanting smile. ‘Thanks for capturing these for me, Beya.’

Beya nodded. And then she asked, ‘So, which of the pictures do you like me to post for your fan club?’

VeShadd bowed his head and scrolled through the pictures again. ‘Mm, let me see!’ he muttered.

In a bit, the sportsman tossed the device on the table.

‘Are you through with them already?’ Beya queried.

‘Oh no, I’m not,’ VeShadd replied. ‘I’ve got something else to tell you and I think it’s sort of more important than the pictures.’

Beya sat up. ‘Okay, I’m listening,’ she said.

## DISCOVERY

## Time Bomb

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**VESHADD** put aside **Beya's phone** tablet, where he was checking the fantastic pictures of him that the lovely young woman captured.

He sat up where he sat beside Beya in the comfy couch of his hotel suite.

‘I’ve got something else to tell you’, he said, ‘and I think it’s sort of more important than the pictures.’

Beya sat up. ‘Okay, I’m listening.’

VeShadd began. ‘I really appreciate the beautiful things you do. You’re so generous in being good to me. And I must tell you, I’ve never been this loved before!’

The sportsman paused, gave a little breath and went on in a moment.

‘I don’t want to be an ingrate, Beya. I want to pay you back for being so loving to me. I want us to date. I want you to be my girlfriend.’

‘I want you to be more than my fan, more than any girl. I want to have you as mine.’

His eyes lingered on her for an understanding.

Beya didn’t believe VeShadd’s words.

‘Are you saying you want to pay me back for being your fan and the only way to pay me back is to make me your girlfriend?’

VeShadd nodded gently.

Beya was astonished. She shot a surprising look at the footballer.

‘I’m not doing all this to date you, no. I just admire you and love all you stand for. I only admire you and, truthfully, that’s all!’

VeShadd had a response ready. ‘Okay; if you say that, I believe you. But be my girlfriend, Beya.’

Beya couldn’t take the scenario anymore.

‘I’m really sorry I have to turn you down, VeShadd,’ she said. ‘I like you a lot, yes. But it’s nothing more than a sincere admiration and respect!’

‘I admire you like a public figure and like a big brother; and I am so sure it’s not about being your girl. You are like a super big brother to me, honestly!’

VeShadd’s ego was bruised. He was getting angrier and fiercer by now.

He yelled out all of a sudden. ‘You scream my name every now and then. You practically stalk me to take my pictures.’

‘You talk with me and laugh with me. I tell you things I can’t tell others... And yet I’m just a like friend or brother to you? Huh!?’

Beya wondered what’d gotten over VeShadd with the way he was getting aggressive over her response.

VeShadd spat on. ‘You just told me a while ago that I’m really so gorgeous. Are you playing with me, Beya? Huh?!’

Beya thought to clear the misunderstanding.

‘No, I’m not,’ she replied. ‘If you have feeling for me then we can say I’m playing with your feelings. But you and I know you don’t have any feelings for me.’

‘I don’t have feelings for you too, VeShadd.’

‘If I have feelings for you then I’d have been angry over the fact that the only reason you’ve got for wanting to date me was to pay me back for being your fan.’

‘But then, I’m not angry – despite how insulting that statement sounds to me.’

‘VeShadd, we don’t have feelings for each other and we don’t owe each other any feelings too.’

She paused and then finished in a moment.

‘Let me continue to be your fan and you continue to be my superman. That’s all I ask.’

VeShadd jumped to his feet in a boiling temper.

He was dazed at how calm and collected Beya was in rejecting him.

He felt disrobed and humiliated. He felt enraged for being refused by a fan girl.

His glorious ego was soiled by someone who seemed so ordinary. He felt so small and felt so angry.

He shouted down into Beya’s face.

‘Are you doing this because you think you are a part of my fame story? Are you doing this because you think you have me in your palm?’

‘I have everything to be your man. What else do you need?’

‘Do I have to sleep with you to show you I’m neither your friend nor your brother?’

‘Huh?!’

Beya was shocked at VeShadd’s words. She got up to her feet.

‘What is wrong with you, VeShadd?’ she queried; staring at him with an astonished look in her face.

‘Why will you sleep with me to prove a point to me. I guess you are stressed already. Let me be on my way.’

The young woman began packing her phone tablet and photo camera into her bag.

‘You are running away now!’ VeShadd yelled. ‘Do I look like a monster that may eat you up? Huh?!’

Beya was silent as she rushed to pack her things into her bag.

The footballer couldn’t take it anymore as his anger boiled like hot volcanic lava.

VeShadd rushed to the door and bolted it up. ‘Do I look like a monster huh?!’ he snarled viciously.

Beya was terrified beyond words. She gasped in shock.

Instantly, some electrifying rage surged through VeShadd’s blood capillaries like a shock wave, as she wondered what the fan girl took him for?

VeShadd charged towards Beya, snarling with a malicious voice.

‘Ain’t I a man?! Hey, ain’t I a man to you?!’

Beya cowered frightfully and crouched low into a small bundle as she screamed hard.

VeShadd came on Beya’s little frame, forcefully carried her small bundle and threw her on his bed.

There was a fierce struggle between the two. And the more Beya struggled to free herself from VeShadd the more the footballer got angry.

He kept yelling into Beya’s face.

‘Who are you to refuse me, huh?! Hey, who are you to treat me as less man? Just who d’ you think you are?!’

As Tai VeShadd sadly had his way with the poor woman in a minute, the young man metamorphosed in Beya’s perception within a microsecond...

From a celestial star... to a lowly mortal... and to a degenerate beast.

Beya was torn with tears immediately afterwards. And she hurried to leave the haunting presence of the cursed beast.

VeShadd felt absolutely empty and unfulfilled. He felt like the loser after all.

‘You can’t leave me now,’ he yelled; his eyes moist with tears.

He rushed to grapple with Beya as she packed her things.

He blurted. ‘I’ve got everything together just a while ago and your presence here has ruined everything! You can’t leave me now, huh!’

Beya struggled to free herself from VeShadd's tight grip.

And with all the force she could muster, she threw VeShadd off and the young man fell on the bed exhausted.

Beya rushed to the door to head out before VeShadd could get up.

But getting to the door, she anxiously fumbled with the lock – as her hands trembled on the door keys.

VeShadd rushed to get hold of a small exotic masterpiece ceramic vase that adorned the bedside bureau furniture.

The masterpiece in the executive hotel suite was an original design of an exotic limited edition.

Made with a dense mix of clay from both Kashmir Valley and Grand Canyon, and glazed superrich with Egyptian enamel glaze, the ceramic masterpiece came out a weighty, deluxe pottery vase.

VeShadd carried the small weighty vase and rushed to Beya at the door.

Beya turned back to see a furious VeShadd rushing up to her.

The young woman cowered in terror; leaning on the door and covering her face with both hands.

‘You can’t walk out on me!’ VeShadd screamed. ‘You can’t humiliate me and still walk out on me!’

Beya screamed as VeShadd came close to her.

The footballer couldn’t take the alarm and he smashed the pottery vase on her forehead.

Beya came slumping down to the ground.

And as she fell over, she got her side pierced by the sharp and pointed edge of a metallic palm tree sculpture sitting close to the door.

VeShadd’s eyes bulged out and he rushed to grab her.

But the young woman slumped down to the floor before the footballer could catch her; blood gushing out from her head and side.

VeShadd sat on the ground in the pool of Beya's blood.

He glanced at his weapon on the floor. And he saw a crack in the inner stem wall of the dense, heavy ceramic vase.

He turned around and stared at the limp blood soaked body sprawled out on the floor in front of him.

He gasped in utter shock and dread.

'Ah, Beya! Beya!'

But it was already too late. The deed had been done.

## DISCOVERY

## Fouls are Fined

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**MRS Jan'il couldn't believe her eyes.**

She rushed up to her daughter's bedside. And she sat right on the bed, staring at her daughter with an excited gleam in her eyes.

She didn't need anything else to prove to her that Beya had fully woken from a month long

coma. For the nineteen-year-old's eyes were open already.

Beya called out in a faint, weak voice. 'Dad... Mum...'

'We're here,' the two parents replied; their eyes moist with tears of happiness.

'Can you see me, Beya? Can you see us?' Mr Jan'il asked with eagerness.

Beya nodded.

'Ah, thank God!' Mrs Jan'il heaved with a delighted sigh; laying her hand on her bosom.

'Thank God you're back, my dear! Thank God you're back!' Mr Jan'il breathed.

Beya tried to sit up. Mr Jan'il motioned for her to stop and he adjusted the bed to raise her upper body to a comfortable sitting position.

'How are you feeling, my dear?' he asked. 'I'll go get the doctor for you.'

'I'm fine Dad,' Beya replied. 'Let's talk for a bit. I really want to talk with dad and mum.'

‘We’re right here, dear,’ Mrs Jan’il answered.

‘We’re listening, my baby,’ Mr Jan’il said.

Beya spoke in a weak, small voice. ‘I’m sorry for putting you in so much stress, dad. I’m really sorry, mum.’

‘Why should we be cross with you, Beya?’ Mr Jan’il quipped, holding his daughter’s hand.

‘You’re all we’ve got, you know. You’re everything we’ve got!’ he said; giving her hand a gentle squeeze.

Mrs Jan’il interposed. ‘We’re only grateful to God who brings you back after four weeks of you lying in coma!’

‘Four weeks?!’ Beya quipped in surprise.

‘Yes, four long weeks!’ Mrs Jan’il replied. ‘Thank God I didn’t lose you. Thank God!’

‘Thank God you’re back to us, my baby!’ Mr Jan’il sighed.

Beya kept quiet for a bit. And then, she thought to share with her parents what was in her

mind. What she experienced during her long, unconscious sleep.

‘I don’t know how to put everything that happened to me. Everything felt like an unending night of blackness. Yet it felt so brief.

‘I was in something that felt like a deep, empty well. At first, I felt comfortable, hiding there. And I feared coming up to the ground.

‘After some time, I began to see a ray of light above the pit. And I really wanted to leave the dark hole.

‘I tried to climb up the deep well. But something like a large file of magnetic papers was drawing me down and I couldn’t climb up to the ground.

‘I resisted the thing pulling me down. I rumbled the papers and tore them; but they just kept sticking together again like I didn’t even do anything to them.

‘Nothing I did could destroy the papers.

‘It continued for what felt like a century and yet like some seconds. I was exhausted after

everything. So, I resigned to reading the papers. And the ray of light shone on me and what I was reading.

‘I soon realised what was in those papers was something I have read before. Only that it came upon me as my reality.

‘It was Genesis chapter 34. The story of Dinah and Shechem.

‘My life seemed like the reflection of Jacob’s girl Dinah. And how Shechem put the cart before the horse in dating her.

‘Like Dinah, too, I was sexually taken advantage of by Tai VeShadd. Someone who misplaced priorities and thought he loved me but wanted to have me to prove a point.

‘But I was able to see that Shechem was never able to escape the penalty for what he did. Even when he chose to unite in marriage with Dinah after he’d raped her.

‘It was clear to me that my assaulter will never escape a penalty that’d cost him more than he bargained for. Even when he decided to be sorry.

‘I understood that God is just; and that His forgiveness doesn’t necessarily clear off the consequences of sin.

‘I understood that there’s a sure penalty for every act of wickedness.

‘But as much as my assaulter would be punished, like Shechem was, God still pointed out my own flaw to me from the scripture.

‘And it didn’t hurt me anymore to hear it.

‘To say I didn’t see my flaw is to be obstinate and proud like Adam. I have learnt to take responsibility for myself and not be quick to push off blame.

Because, like Dinah, I went sightseeing the men about town and was intercepted by a modern day monster!

‘I followed a superstar around like he is a demigod. Yet I was hurt that he treated me like a lowly mortal.

‘And as if that wasn’t enough, I followed him down to his hotel room at 11 pm. After the

opening match of the World Cup. Just to show him random pictures of him that I took.

‘I’ve forgotten he’s a human being with blood and veins like me. I’ve even forgotten he’s a man. I only saw him as a star. I only saw him as a superstar. I was wrong.

‘I cried to God for mercy in that dark pit. I prayed that He should please forgive me and save me.

‘And soon, a ladder descended into the pit. And I started climbing up the ladder until I came up awake.

‘I now understood that God always wants to save us out of a pit. But not without first making us see where we failed. Not without making us learn our lesson.

‘I’m sorry, dad and mum. I’m sorry for being that kind of kid you’re just knowing about. I’m sorry for causing you so much trouble with this.

‘I’m so sorry, dad. I’m so sorry, mum.’

‘Oh no, my lovely; come on!’ Mrs Jan’il breathed, dissolving into tears.

‘You haven’t done anything wrong; we aren’t angry with you at all,’ she said as she took her daughter in her arms and hugged her tight.

‘Thank God you’re back to us!’ Mr Jan’il said in a low breath. ‘Ah, thank God you’re back!’

And tears of happiness rolled down the eyes of those three.



**The Jan’ils were still in the executive** hotel suite turned an exclusive hospital ward.

Doctor Raiib had come to examine Beya.

And the doctor had stated that the young lady had recovered a great deal and that she could go home with her family by the end of day.

She would only have to do more of resting daily, he said. And she’d soon be perfectly fine and back to her daily activities

Beya’s parents were overjoyed.

Mr Jan’il talked with her daughter. And father and daughter chuckled and laughed like they just reunited after ages of parting.

Mr Jan'il laughed at himself, about the fact that when he was reading aloud Beya's copy of *Lord of the Rings* book series to her in coma, he was soon engrossed and was reading to himself.

He joked that he had just lost the right to complain about Beya's obsession with popular fiction. He told Beya he'd have to keep that series of *Lord of the Rings* for about a couple of weeks.

'And, you know,' Mr Jan'il added, 'Dad's so embarrassed to admit that this time around I'm not ceasing it but I'm reading it!'

Beya chuckled. 'And I'm loaning you, huh!'

Mrs Jan'il switched on the TV in the hotel room.

The first channel she tuned to was showing a quick recap of the just-concluded 1<sup>st</sup> half of Quitalia's match against South Korea.

Mrs Jan'il knew Beya might be hurt with the sight of Tai VeShadd, her assaulter. So she quickly flipped the channel through other ones.

She soon came on a channel that wasn't talking about the match. The channel was just airing the afternoon news.

Mrs Jan'il decided to join the father-daughter talk.

But she was stopped by a voice on TV. It wasn't a familiar one but the things it was saying was absolutely not unfamiliar.

The news channel had suddenly switched to a live video clip.

It was VeShadd going live in confessing his crime on the Internet.

His crime of rape and violence on a certain Miss Beya; who he happened to have an acquaintance with.

And who, in a bid to cover up the incident, was secretly hospitalised in his hotel suite.

For she fell into a state of coma after he assaulted her.

It was breaking news and the news channel was fast enough to catch up on it.

VeShadd apologised to Beya and her family for the threats and inhumane treatment they were subjected to by his backup, the World Union, just so the case could be buried to save his head.

‘As much as I will like to be among the golden team that wins the World Cup,’ VeShadd said in a solemn voice, as he wound up his confession, ‘I believe I’m not worthy of holding that trophy in my hands.

‘I admit to my crime and will surrender myself to the authorities to be investigated and punished for my atrocities.

‘I have learnt through my experience that weaknesses and flaws aren’t virtues to be proud of at all. They aren’t merely habits to indulge or excuse.

‘They are time bombs that should be gotten rid of by asking the Holy Spirit of God to burn them with His fire, and turn those weaknesses into strengths...

‘Just like raw gold is refined in the furnace and made pure and strong!

‘I was nonchalant to the word of God about my flaw and I didn’t ask for the pleasant fire of the Holy Spirit to refine me.

‘But I am given an undeserved second chance now. So, rather than being completely destroyed by my flaw, I will be going through the painful fire of affliction to refine me...

‘Instead of the peaceful fire of the Holy Spirit that I could have sought for while I had the opportunity.

‘People, your weakness may be as common and ordinary as anger, lust, pride, or even drinking.

‘Or they may be as big and embarrassing as addiction to sex or pornography; or even incest, pedophilia or homosexuality.

‘Whatever they are, they are besetting sins and they operate exactly like time bombs.

‘Small as they may appear, they would someday blast up a sky high explosion that could raise down an entire life!

‘Just if you do not desperately cry to God now to do something about that ticking bomb!

‘I, Tai VeShadd, am a sorry testimony of that fact. Please do not end up like me!’

And with that the footballer finished his live recording.

VeShadd’s video went viral like the spread of a global pandemic. The news reached Coach Alhi in no time and he knew VeShadd couldn’t continue to play.

Quitania went on with the World Cup but without VeShadd. For the accomplished footballer was soon arrested and tried in court for his crime.

Tai VeShadd was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment on a two count charge of rape and attempted murder.

The seven years’ imprisonment wasn’t a big deal to VeShadd anymore. For there was grace from Heaven to go through the affliction fire unscathed.

It was better to him than the soul's maddening prison he'd been in for what seemed like ages... in the struggle to cover his sin.

Now he was absolutely sure he would no longer be a slave of that weakness that wanted to destroy him.

Tai VeShadd lost his illustrious, world celebrated football career to a tiny flaw.

One tiny flaw that super-magnified itself into a monstrous bulldozer. Just when the young man's shine was the brightest in the entire world.

Mrs Jan'il turned off the TV with the remote.

The family of three all heaved a deep sigh and went absolutely silent after.

They had always wanted justice. And now that justice was right in front of them, they lack the expression to articulate how dreadful it felt.

At last, Mr Jan'il broke the silence with a deepened sigh.

'Ah, they call God the Dreadful Avenger!' he said.

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*I do not understand what I do; for I don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate.*

*So I find that this law is at work: when I want to do good, what is evil is the only choice I have.*

*My inner being delights in the law of God. But I see a different law at work in my body...*

*What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death?*

**[ROMANS 7:15, 21 – 23, 24; *The Bible*]**

## DISCOVERY

## Part III

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### — A Mortal After All —

This entire section is culled from **Kayode Olla's *Dragongod***, a crime thriller novel, p. 136 – 145.

Published by Garlaxi's Media, Nov 2019.

## DISCOVERY

## The Emptiness

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**A SMALL, crisp wind tore through** the ornamental shrubs that lined the perimeters of Ulli Bier Arts Theatre.

It was the night Kelvin and Jordan performed at Ulli Bier.

A teeming crowd of spectators surged out from within the theatre, with many warm hands congratulating the two bright poets.

Jordan was pleased to meet Kelvin via this medium. Meeting to become buddies after a mighty clash on the poetry stage moments ago.

Kelvin and Jordan warmed up with a chat where they stood.

Caleb walked up to the excited two and joined them in their chatter.

The semifinal stage of the contest Kelvin and Jordan were anticipating a few days back had held. But the poetry contest was suddenly wound up with today's event.

The event that was meant to determine the runners-up for the final stage was suddenly made to produce the winner.

The boys talked about everything. From everyone's poetry to Jordan's medicine. They talked about the relationships between poetry and medicine.

Their talk led them into looking for poetry in everything in life and every field of study they could think of. They garnished their discussion with jokes and laughter.

Kelvin liked Jordan already. He felt as comfortable with him as he was with Caleb.

The three boys also exchanged contacts.

And to Jordan, it was like the arrival of a long anticipated party. It thrilled him the friendship he'd always wanted to weave with Kelvin was here. He did savour every moment.

They were lost the passage of time until Jordan's phone rang.

Jordan picked up. It was his father calling and he needed him around. Jordan had to go now. He told his partners.

And then, he disappeared into the darkness ahead of them.



**Kelvin and Caleb were seated now.**

The fast racing winds have altogether softened into little breezes of moist air. And they whizzed past every once in a while.

The two friends were down on their butts to talk on some more personal stuff.

Kelvin went first. 'You know why I wanted to see you?'

Caleb shook his head.

'I have a secret I want leave in your hand,' Kelvin said, his voice both soft and low.

Caleb wanted to reply with a joke. 'I hope you didn't commit a crime, son of man?' That was what he'd wanted to say and reek with a contagious laughter.

But then, Kelvin's demeanour was always the serious one. And especially now. Caleb wouldn't know if his friend meant his words to be taken seriously. And so he wouldn't joke about this.

Caleb was concerned about his friend already. 'I hope you're well. I hope you're not sick, or something? Is everything okay?'

Kelvin laughed. ‘Look at you! D’ you think I got a medical report that I’m terminally ill, or something? Don’t worry, man. I don’t have any sickness I’m tending to. At least, as of tonight!’

Caleb chuckled. ‘C’mon, dude!’ he said, elbowing Kelvin. He flashed an eager grin to his friend. ‘So Mister Man, what’s your emergency. That your face looked so serious?’

Kelvin looked at him, his eyeballs a dull glow. ‘Promise me you won’t tell anyone. Not even Yemi.’

Caleb shot him a quizzical look. ‘Okay, I promise,’ he breathed.

Kelvin began. ‘You know Professor Oni. You know I go to him often.’

‘Yeah, yeah... I know that. What about it?’

A poised silence passed between them. Caleb’s gaze quietly searched Kelvin’s wan eyes. The glint in those eyes lacked the lustre and vitality. They seemed too vague and expressionless that they made Caleb all the more perplexed.

Caleb lowered his searching eyes to Kelvin's slightly parted lips when his friend resumed speaking.

'He's helping me oversee the flat I'm building,' Kelvin whispered.

Caleb was lost. 'Wait a second, I don't get it. You mean... no, I still don't get it...'

Kelvin explained. 'I've been investing in cash crop plantation farming since about three years ago. That's with the money I've been making from poetry performances, ghostwriting novels for celebrities and participating in art fellowships.

'I own a plantain farm on a five hectare land I bought in a village. And plantain farming is one very lucrative cash crop agribusiness in West Africa.'

Caleb was speechless. He wondered how much he didn't know about Kelvin.

Kelvin went on. 'None of my family knows about this and you're the first to know.'

Caleb muttered. 'Wow, that's unbelievable!'

‘Perhaps,’ Kelvin muttered with an acquiescing gleam.

He resumed. ‘I started to build the flat for my mother and my siblings without my family knowing. My dad wished to buy a land and build our family a house before he died three years ago.

‘We spent the entire money dad got to get this done on the illness that eventually took him. Since we lost him, I’ve wanted to do this for the rest of us—my mother and my siblings.

‘And that’s why I invested in agribusiness when I started becoming successful.’

Caleb gasped. ‘That’s so great, man!’

‘I’m telling you this now because I really want to feel excited tonight. Why, tonight’s poetry win for me is a big crowning for the completion of the house last weekend.’

Caleb couldn’t hold his utter amazement. ‘Wow, wow, wow! You finished the house last weekend, too!’

Caleb sprang up on his feet and stood with arms akimbo.

‘No, no... this is great big news, Kelvin! Of course, it still remains a secret with me. But seriously, this isn’t something to tell me with a dull face, man! Don’t you know? This is... my goodness, this is big news!’

Kelvin smiled wanly and pulled him down to his seat. ‘I know,’ he interposed. ‘Get your butt down.’

Caleb couldn’t hold it in, the excitement. He flashed a quizzical smile at Kelvin and elbowed him. ‘C’mon dude, be happy! What’s up? Why’re you all sulky, man? Come on!’

Kelvin’s voice was altogether hollow and shallow. ‘I’m excited, man. But it’s like this excitement’s got no real happiness as it were. I’m sort of happy, but it’s like this happiness has got no real joy or something like that.’

He paused awhile.

Caleb took his face in his hands, and searched his dull, dark face.

Kelvin pulled off and faced elsewhere. ‘I don’t know, but something has always been missing,’ he went on.

‘It’s a void I keep trying to fill up with more vibes around,’ he said. ‘I hate to hear you tell me something I know myself. I hate to admit it’s something about God.’

He bowed his head heavily and buried it within his cupped hands.

‘Ah, why do you keep haunting me? Can’t you forget me altogether, uh? Just let go; let go of me, huh!’

He held his head in his hand and cringed into a bundle.

Caleb patted him on the back, wrapped a hand around him and stared into the starless skies.

The sound of his voice was both soft and low.

‘You remember the Saturday night we went to the art gallery? That night you asked me to accompany you. When you wanted to buy that luxury mixed media art classic you saw on Friday.’

Kelvin pulled out an acquiescing grunt from his throat.

Caleb mused. 'I think we were told it was the only replica remaining that Saturday night.'

Kelvin raised his head up a little. 'Yeah,' he said in a dull, weary voice. 'I met two replicas on Friday; one had been sold out by then.'

'Actually, Caleb, the gallery made an announcement that the legendary artist created just three replicas of the same design. But each having uniquely different colour combinations.'

'I told you I just went to appreciate the artwork the previous day and didn't even take my credit card along. Really, Caleb, I didn't know then I'd love it so much.'

He bowed his head into his laps again.

Caleb slapped him small on the backside. 'Silly guy! You know I still won't ever understand why you have to miss getting that rarity of an artwork! Come to think of it, it was a sentimental exotic classic you wouldn't ever get in that particular form!'

Kelvin moaned. 'I was stupid that night, I know! You kept telling me that Saturday night that I was drunk. That I saying the grand artwork

was unimpressive was just because I wasn't seeing it from the clear perspective.'

He raised his head, pinned his elbows over his kneecaps and sank his head in-between his spread palms.

'I dearly wished I got it that night—goodness knows! I was told when I returned on Sunday morning that it was sold out that very Saturday night!

'I realised how much alcohol blurred my sense of judgment and my eyesight, Caleb. I stopped taking alcohol ever since. I no longer drink but the scar is still there. It was really painful.'

Caleb breathed. 'I bet it was.'

Kelvin sat right up and shot a gaze into Caleb's gleaming eyes. 'But why wasn't I listening to you that night?'

Caleb squinted at him. 'Because you were drunk, brother,' he said in a soft breath.

Defeated, Kelvin muttered. 'Oh I was.'

‘And that’s my point all along,’ Caleb added, patting his sober friend on the back.

‘What is?’ Kelvin queried; his bland face turning a little quizzical.

Caleb eyes stared blankly into space; his face’s turned in an angle that casted its frame in a dark silhouette.

“With the merciful you will show yourself merciful,’ he mused aloud; ‘with a blameless man you will show yourself blameless; with the pure you will show yourself pure; and with the devious you will show yourself shrewd.’”

Kelvin was lost somewhat. He couldn’t place the words. ‘What was... who said that? I mean, those lines are from where in particular?’

Caleb went on in a bit.

‘And it added, “For you will save the humble people, but will bring down haughty looks.”’

He paused a little. ‘Sorry, bro; that was the Bible, talking about God. Psalm chapter eighteen, and verses twenty-five through twenty-seven.’

Kelvin would've flared up. But he was curious to know how Caleb was going to tie things together. And so he listened.

Caleb resumed. 'If you're looking through a broken lens, you know the resultant vision will certainly be broken.

'Well, Kelvin, I remember what you told me once before about what made you rebel against God. How you liked to call yourself an atheist, or at least an agnostic since then.

'Look, I'm really touched for the costly loss of your dad and I know how much that is hurting in itself. I see it can be really more hurting to dearly pray your dad gets well and he only dies eventually. And that's after you've spent his entire fortune on making him well!'

A slight grunt escaped Kelvin's throat. And his eyes were moist.

Caleb went on. 'You see, when we lose a loved one in this part of the world, the general thing people do to console is to present the bereaved with worst case scenarios. Things more horrible than death.

‘Like the deceased having a lifelong acute schizophrenia instead. Or them being brain dead for life. Or if the deceased had become a sickening monster or a serial killer. Or even became a carrier of a major pandemic.

‘People often get consoled hearing these, become grateful to God and move on. Bereaved people sometime don’t even wait to be consoled before they comfort themselves along this line. If this doesn’t work for them, time eventually heals.

‘But then, my concern is why you haven’t been consoled for the past years.

‘Your mum lost a husband; your sisters lost a father. It wasn’t your loss alone. I’m sure your mum and your sisters have all moved on. Why haven’t you been consoled? That’s the only question I’ve always asked myself.’

Kelvin made a rough, weary grunt.

‘And, of course,’ Caleb went on, ‘after I thought of it many times, I found the answer. It’s not because the incidence was so grave you can’t be consoled. The issue is with you.

‘Your service to God then has given you some kind of justification for pride. Yes, pride. Not to human; but to God.

‘To a great extent, you’ve forgotten the Almightyness of God that you thought your service and loyalty to him in the past has leveled you up to Him.

‘God’s not the president of your country that you can protest against. He’s God that knows what’s best for you and does what He wants. You can’t make a case against God. You don’t even have a case against Him.

‘Have you served Him more than the angels that worship Him day and night; and yet He never gave them a free will like we humans?

‘No matter how fatherly He is to you, how friendly He is to you and how much you think you’ve served Him, He is still not your mate. He is God!’

Kelvin heaved a deep sigh.

Caleb resumed. ‘Have you ever wondered why Abel’s accepted prayer would make him love

God more but Cain's denied prayer would make him hate God even more?

'Have you ever wondered why hearing about God will be like a soothing massage to some people but to some others it'll be like touching an open wound?

'Have you ever wondered why hearing about Jesus Christ produces a beautiful smile with some people but with some others it makes their blood boil.'

'God is ever good, gracious and righteous; but our heart's window pane which is sometime stained with sinfulness gives us a tainted view.

'Just like the alcohol blurred your sense of judgment, the windowpane through which you peer at God's Almightyness is stained with pride and haughty feeling of entitlement.

'And no matter how hard you look, you can't see Him right.

Kelvin was still and quiet.

The words had reached deep down into his soul. Kelvin had no objection. His good friend

had read him through and through and every word resonated with his heartbeat.

A tear appeared in the corner of his eye. He sunk his head as the words soaked him like rainfall.

His silence was surrender.

‘You see,’ Caleb went on, ‘you being drunk that night we went to get the masterpiece didn’t reduce the worth of the artwork one tiny bit, does it?’

‘The fact that your sense of appreciation was beclouded by the drunken state didn’t lessen the work’s truest value.’

‘As a matter of fact, the masterpiece found a home in a grateful art lover’s collections the moment you decided to not take it home.’

Caleb looked up into the vast sky.

‘Kelvin,’ he whispered, ‘that emptiness or void you talked about some moments ago is simply unavoidable when someone throws God out through the backdoor of their life.’

‘It is a God-shaped vacuum that doesn’t get filled up no matter how much stuff you stack into the vast cavity!

‘People who throw God out of their souls grope for Him throughout their entire lives with a haunting emptiness.’

Caleb ran his gaze sky-wide and took in the sight of the vast night sky.

He finished.

‘Like the loss of that priceless artwork. That still haunts your aesthetic sense up until now!’

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*Return, O holy Dove, return!  
Sweet messenger of rest!  
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn  
And drove Thee from my breast.*

*The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne  
And worship only Thee.*

***William Cowper, 1731 – 1800***

## DISCOVERY

# Epilogue

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— How to Live So Happy —



**WHEN the full stop is missing at the** end of a sentence, no matter how understandable the sentence is to everyone, it is regarded by language scholars as incomplete.

The layman may not notice the flaw, but the one who treasures words knows something is definitely missing.

Well, if you live entirely on food without ever taking in undiluted water, your body will definitely crave for water itself. It'll cry out something is missing.

There's a vacuum and emptiness in us all that never gets filled up with more money, or power, or success, or sexual escapades.

That thirst, yearning and craving. When you have it all and yet you feel you need something else to thrill you somehow.

It is that missing thing that leaves us laughing without the thrill of excitement. Excited without the sweetness of happiness. Or happy without the bliss of real joy.

And that big vast cavity is a **God-shaped void**. It can only be filled up by God through His Son Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind (*John 14: 23; Revelation 3: 20*).

You see, a wealthy young ruler approached Jesus once before with this inner void. He'd got a great big life at a young age but sheltered a haunting emptiness in his heart.

He was a disciplined moral man and still never came close to finding true satisfaction.

Jesus had compassion on him and told him: **'One thing you lack...'**

And He went on to reveal that wealth and riches have become an idol to the young, prosperous man.

His assets and possessions had tried to fill up that big vacuum in his heart reserved only for his Maker; but they wouldn't be enough to fill it up still.

And the young man went away frustrated and sad because he still gave riches the first place in his heart (*Mark 10: 17 – 22*).

On the other hand, there are people who lead great, unearthly and covet-able lives through and through. And people who can't afford the world's necessary comfort and still beam with unparalleled heavenly happiness.

Because they've got that one needful thing!

**But *one thing* is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her (*Luke 10: 42*).**

Finding the abundant life in Christ is that one single thing that matters through life and eternity!

Making God occupy His reserved place in our soul through Christ gives our lives its real essence.

We implore you to give Jesus a try today with all sincerity of heart. Let Him have the lordship over your life and trust in His redemptive sacrifice to save your soul from dominion of Sin and Satan. He will give you a fresh, glorious start and a really fulfilling life.

Go right ahead and say this prayer sincerely from your heart if you want to make Jesus Christ your Lord and personal Saviour.



***Lord Jesus Christ,***

*I am a worthless sinner. But I thank You for dying on the Cross of Calvary to save me from the power of Sin and Satan, and to give me abundant life.*

*I am terribly sorry for my many sins and I forsake them. Please, forgive me all of them, O Lord. By Your precious grace I will not go back to them again. Give me the power to lead a new, glorious and fulfilling life from today and forever.*

*Thank you, Jesus, for making me right with God the Father. Thank You for saving my soul.*

*In Jesus Precious Name. Amen.*



**If you have prayed this prayer** from your heart, the Lord Jesus, who truthfully promises in His word to answer, has done just so (*John 6:37*).

You may begin to feel peace in your heart like never before. The Holy Spirit will also begin to confirm with your own spirit that you are now a child of God.

Do not indulge any guilt in your heart no matter how terrible your sins were. God is merciful and gracious through His Son Jesus Christ and He has forgiven you all of them and given you a fresh start (*1 Cor. 5: 17*).

From now on, let God's reserved place be uncontested and entirely His in your heart.

A believer that shares God's first place in their heart with any idol of a person, position, dream or whatever, will only lead a frustrating, unfulfilling life.

It is why people like Solomon the King considered his life a vain thing in spite of great wisdom and abundant riches.

Also find a Bible believing church close to you and attend regularly, to fellowship with other people that are living the new life.

Get to read the Holy Bible, too, from time to time to learn more of this new and living way.

*Congratulations and Welcome to God's Own Family!*

**Kayode & Tola Olla**

*Your Brother & Sister in Christ*

