A Novel

An unbearable scar love left in the past...
Will the rich, bossy Ana love again this time round when a double-edged...

Shadows Don’t Lie

teasing suspense
About N. O. Bekoe

Hi there, the pleasure is all mine in meeting you. I am an African. I write mystery/suspense, and romance. Currently, I am working hard on publishing *Now Or Never*, a mystery/suspense, while writing *Haywire*, another mystery/suspense. Depending on when I find myself a literary agent, you are bound to hear of the two novels above, both are informative, educative, and idiosyncrasy-changing. I use Wattpad as my official website so there is all to know about me there.

It would mean the world to me if I could hear from you.

n_o_bekoe: Twitter, Wattpad, Instagram

Author N. O. Bekoe: Facebook and Linkedin.

My favourite character is Joe, can’t wait to hear of yours. XOXO
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Thank you.
Shadows Don’t Lie

For Rosanna

THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION TO BE ENJOYED, NOT TO LEAD ASTRAY.
Prologue

Chapter 1

The tempting harmattan breeze strode silently through East Legon, Accra. Bodies that could not take the outrageous demands of the breeze had surrendered, and were busily and delightfully squeaking beds with their counterparts.

But in one of the most beautiful mansions in East Legon, something different was going on. The commanding harmattan current, in connivance with years of celibacy and a natural must, were squirming Ana to the tunes of the night. Every weakness in her had come to play that dawn. It was all coming to a rest in between her two effeminate thighs. She had spent the last couple of minutes visiting pleasurable time pasts.

Time was up to return to reality but she wanted to stay much longer. Under the warmth of her quilt, she jerked awake to the falsehood.

A dream, she realized much to her distaste.

She plonked her body back onto the bed after sitting up. Her hand settled on her forehead as she tried to recall the most recent images. Most especially the man who was doing crazy things to her in her dreams.

After the futility, she spread her hands aside, slowly groping up and down as if searching for a brother to the night with whom to manufacture some dawn heat. Ana knew the dream was a natural sign.

She bit her lips and pondered why invisible faces were now making love to her after so many years of successful celibacy.

A leopard never changes its spots but Ana’s were changing. They were changing from being single to wanting to be loved.
A couple of days after knowing she had conceived, her husband passed away, she swore never to give her heart, body, or soul to any man again. Unfortunately, and coincidentally, news of her husband’s death reached her just hours after she had found out she was a second wife. This was barely a month after their wedding. She was gravely paralyzed to find out that all the family members of her husband who attended their wedding ceremony were impersonators.

As a royal but not a Prince, Ana’s late husband, by customs and tradition, was suppose to marry a woman from another royal lineage, but Ana came along the way and he could not withstand what he felt for Ana.

When her husband realized Ana knew the reality of the situation, out of guilt and impulse, he called her to meet her at home. He truncated work that day. It was when he was coming home that he met a fatal accident. His Land Cruiser crumpled like a piece of paper under an articulated truck. For several hours, they had to cut the vehicle piece by piece before finally getting to the owner who had already joined the silent majority instantly upon impact. He could not return home to explain.

Ana was the most disappointed creature in the Milky Way galaxy.

A man she had given her all to, had put her second while she put him first in her everything. Sorrow and grief came at her like undisputed warlords. She felt the word pain in capital letters.

The house in which she lived currently, she fought with her last breath to retain. Her late husband’s family did their best to reclaim everything that their boy bought her to the last G-string. She kept the conception a secret and nearly aborted it but for the timely interference from her late mother, who had been studying her daughter after the saddening situation.

From that moment on, she had become an extremist and a philosopher; men are the most evil creatures a woman should smile at. They are cheats. The most callous beings, bad spirits camouflaged behind human skins...

She worked her way through the ranks and eventually to the top. When she set up her own company, she could not agree more; what men can achieve, women can achieve better. You will only see her smile sincerely when she needed a deal with another head of an organization who unfortunately was male. Those fake smiles, she tried her best to perpetuate.

In times of prosperity, friends are plenty, however, Ana was the direct opposite of this saying. She did not have the time, not that she did not have friends, she had, but her priorities almost always spent her day for her.

Ana laid on her bed with her eyes glued to the roof, thinking through her schedule for the upcoming day. Stealthily, sleep took her away again.
Chapter 2

Ana was up before morning broke. She had been doing this for the past decade so it had become a part of her. Toasted bread with fried egg was all her busy day permitted. In the kitchen, while breakfast was not ready yet she would go through her mail on her MacBook on many occasions.

At times, she wished a day was about thirty-six or forty-two hours, so that she could accomplish many tasks before retiring to bed. She was too much of a workaholic that many a time she would grudgingly succumb to the inarguable power of sleep with complaints of unfinished work on her lips. She would wake up and the first thought on her mind was work.

Joe, the fetus she nearly aborted sixteen years ago, came to the kitchen in his training kits. He pecked his mother good morning and went for the fridge. Ana rolled up her eyes and pouted her lips. He had not brushed yet.

Joe was her pride and joy.

Ana could not help but complain about the fumes that left his mouth in the peck. They had been living under the same roof all their lives. He was used to her grumbles. He smiled as he gulped down some cold water. He was about to go jogging.

‘Why do you always conceal the truth?’ Joe teased.

Ana smiled and bit her lip. She knew what her son was insinuating, and it was one trait that was characteristic of Joe’s late father.

Back then, when Joe’s father met Ana, he could tease the beauty out of her until she was blushing uncontrollably. She always complained that she did not like being teased, but always had a smile on while she tossed and hopped around sheepishly in her blush.

Joe turned around, expecting a grin on his mother’s face, and there it was, as wide as their frying pan.

He had been teasing his mother for a long-time. He says that she blushed anytime he gave her a peck, and that he was growing suspicious of her. He had suggested dating sites for her on countless occasions, most especially when she came home totally exhausted, but she would turn
the offer down a million times because ‘it’s preposterous,’ she always said. Ana would rather have a walk with pappy, her dog, than spend a few hours with one politician who did not know what to make of taxpayers’ money.

Rising through the ranks, she had had countless offers from business gurus who promised her the Osu Castle but she turned all of them down.

‘Heartbreakers, cheats, once I slip on a banana peel and fall open-legged on their groin, I’ll be of no use to them.’ These were her words.

After the disheartening incident with her late husband, her strength to love again had gone into hibernation. A quantum of pain difficult to fathom, had been brewing in her still-assembling heart after her first love remorselessly shattered it.

She admired her son with pride as he squatted to lace his Nike. She had single-handedly taken care of him for sixteen solid years. What an achievement that was, taking into consideration how reality sunk her during the aftermath of the emotional misery.

Ana, before she landed her first job, would be the first to arrive at the premises of a company during the day of interview. Countless times she would perform outstandingly well at the interview but would not allow the final phase that most CEOs wanted, sex. Persistence has never broken a bone in the history of mankind, after the uncountable questioning, evaluation, and conferences, eventually, she landed herself a job. It was at no other company than one of the largest companies in Accra. Naturally hardworking, she caught the eye of the owner of the company. Years later, with the old man’s help, Ana began her own.

Initially it was difficult, but Ana was a fighter. At one point she nearly sold her mansion to pay for some losses incurred. She was fortunate to survive the droughts and dips of the endeavour. Years later, she began seeing signs of fruits. Those signs were more invigorating than anything.

Competition was tough, especially for Ana. Females hardly roamed certain corridors of power, but she did, which paid off handsomely. She now had them in her pocket after weathering all their storms. Nothing succeeds like success, once she reached up the social ladder, the right people came her way. She was a smooth talker who could persuade anyone to perform what she wanted, this she used to her advantage. For the suitors that came her way once in a while, she gave them zero tolerance. If a man loved Ana and stood before her, before he could talk she would have already read his mind. She would tell you it cannot happen.

Back to the kitchen, Joe mocked her with a wink on his way out. A wink that said earn for yourself someone who would love you. Ana could see Kwame waiting in the compound. They had been jogging together after knowing they were both Manchester United fans.
During one weekend, after a match that they won, Kwame could not help but put up a Manchester United flag out in his window. It was there that Joe knew they were on the same side of the pitch.

Kwame lived next door. He was an up and coming writer, with his first novel currently halted because the suitable agent was hard to find. He was not interested in self-publishing, though he had all the needed resources. He prefers radio to television, because he claims the radio stimulates more imageries in the mind than the tele.

He was older than Joe but younger than Ana.

Kwame’s father, who now resided in the States due to medical reasons, bought the house a few months after Ana moved into hers. They had been good neighbours for a long-time. Kwame was born to Ghanaian parents but schooled in the United States. After school, he began helping his Uncle run his father’s companies in the States whiles his father oversaw those in Ghana and other West African countries, but when his health started failing him, an exchange was necessary. Too much cigarette and vodka, his heart was failing him by the month. Before he left he told Ana a lot about his son. Ana needed not be clairvoyant to know that it was a tactful way of saying kindly keep an eagle eye on my son when I am not around.

Ana watched Kwame and Joe walk out the gate. She smacked her laptop, shoved it into her hand bag, and went for her car.

Chapter 3

In a green Panama hat, a well pressed white top, and a pair of green trousers, the Security of Jona Group of Companies eased up in his tracks when the frontage of one of Ana’s car revealed itself from a distance. He always thanked his stars for the fact that the company’s location always made view for him to see who was approaching from a kilometre away. If not for the vantage, he bet he would have been sacked before long. During most times of the week, car horns would jerk him awake from his nightmares when a worker was entering or wanted to leave.

Before he went to the gate, he flagged one worker who was entering the front door that her CEO was coming. She run to her desk and upon sitting, sent a bulk message across.
‘The WITCH is in.’

In a matter of seconds, the whole place fell into dead silence. Some in the haste knocked their knees to the hard wooden compartments and hopped on one leg to their seats, squirming in agony as they logged on to their respective accounts and began work. Only pecks from keyboards did any talking from that point forward.

Most at times the Security felt a stupid urge to lie down when Ana’s car was slowly thrusting into the compound. He would greet Ana about three to four times before she entered the front door.

Ana entered with majestic steps. As she walked to her office, as though she was not watching, she could see from end to end in her peripheral view. They knew beyond doubt that she was watching with hawk eyes.

She quickly settled in her swivel chair, replied all emails, shuffled some files on her table, and span around to her side. The view she loved so much, seeing her sea of workers spread out beneath like worshippers seeking blessings from a goddess. She loved to watch the hustle and bustle at work. Her working environment was perfect for strict supervision. Diligence is the mother of good fortunes, so she wanted to instil diligence in her workers.

Ana’s office stood a floor high from the rest of the building, so that she could see everybody through the transparent glass walls. When one was outside, one could not see inside her office but she could see from the inside to outside. She had been subject to the feeling of being constantly watched by her Director in a similar building so she knew how it felt like. This kept her employees on their toes every time.

When Ana landed herself a job fourteen years ago, it was worse. She never knew humans like her Director existed. The old man lived and breathed his work. At present, Ana found herself doing same. When she was in her heavenly office, no one dared idled without pretending to work. If you were caught dozing or barring, if only she was not in her normalcy, you would pass free, but if she was, your day would be a mess. One would pass for the laziest worker of the day. A spectacular volley of tongue-lash would be hollered at that worker. Mostly, the silence that would ensue after the fiasco would pass for the Guinness Book of Records. She believed in kill one to warn a few. No one wanted to be Ana’s scapegoat by will. Moreover, she always kept her fingers on the pulse so that her company was the best or one of the best.

That morning, Ana had nearly called out Becky, her personal assistant, when it dawned on her that Becky quit last week. She was about her eleventh personal assistant to quit working under her.

Most of them found her inhumanely demanding and dictatorial. Working as her personal
assistant, one would have to meet multiple deadlines, multi-task through out the day, and occasionally work some overtimes before retiring for the day, leaving only the personal assistant and Ana at the work place. They would type until their nails wanted to fall out. Her workers called her by many names she was not aware of: Hitler, Idi Amin, wicked lioness, the list continues. Today, she was called ‘the witch,’ because Becky screamed the word in her face when she quitted. Before Becky, Ana was ‘Monster’; the Personal Assistant before Becky wrote the word on her windscreen with her red lipstick on her way out of the building.

Each time it was about closing time, Ana could read the beam that shone on her workers face. Today was no different.

‘Lazy people.’ Her employees could not wait to leave. Most especially the males, who never spent a second in the building after 4 p.m. She watched them contemptuously with a slow head shake.

The annual dinner was in a few weeks’ time. No personal assistant meant that she had to plan the dinner by herself. It was another work that could break the back of a camel, she concluded. On top of the backlog on her workspace, just picking up the phone to call some decor to plan the upcoming event was too tiring an act. Ana hardly availed herself to the opportunities and pleasures that life offered, her only times were funerals, parties she was invited to that she gave deep consideration before attending, and the annual company dinner.

Today, she had planned on promoting one of them to the position of Personal assistant, and she knew too well that no one would vie for the two-edged position. Once her personal assistant, one’s salary would brim a little, but Keeping up with her pace was the other cup one needed to fill. Around noon she called for a meeting and for the first time hang her proposal in the air. This time she did not forcefully appoint someone like she always did, hand-tying the chosen one to smile and jubilate against his or her will. They all went Roman Catholic with the sign of cross when she dismissed the meeting. Some shot surprised glances at others, asking when the devil confessed Christ. Something had certainly changed about their CEO. Ana knew no one would knock on her door asking for the position so she delete the expectation in her memory.

Having little to do, she left work in quite some haste that day, nearly causing the Security’s soul to run out of his body with a loud honk that bounced him up from sleep.

She branched off to the Accra mall and bought some rose flowers. A mournful air ventilated her car. That day was exactly sixteen years her husband died in the fatal car accident. It was a bold decision on her path, because for all those years she had never visited his gravestone. Today was the first time after the burial that she had decided to visit. A face between straight and scorn was what her visage wore. It had become a natural reflex each time she felt like lamenting over the heartbreak.
When she arrived at the cemetery, stepping out of her car was another decision that required great effort and forgiveness.

Why am I here in the first place?

If he truly loved her, he would not have made her a choice. Making her a second wife but pretending she was his world in front of everybody.

She rested her forehead on her wheel and closed her eyes. Tears had wetted her lids when she opened them. She stepped out and had no difficulty at all in locating the gravestone. A few steps away from her car, she became weary and weak. She felt like some part of her had joined the lady-killer down there in the grave. Reaching in front of it, she read his name but did her best not to pronounce it in her head.

He had become a name too abominable to think of.

On impulse, she tore her sight from the name and looked else where. A cortege of mourners were not too far away. She finally squatted after a thorough debate whether to throw the scented red cluster on the stone or continue what she was doing now. She felt a soft weakness in her chest. It shook her to signal that a cry was not far away. After all these years, she finally told him to rest in peace. These three words, she had kept to herself, because she wanted him to burn in hell, to rest in painful pieces.

After about a minute, she wanted to ask the dead why it bore her to such an abyss, but the weakness in her chest had reached just behind her lips.

They quivered with an impatience to cry.

Just a word, and tears would burst out of her like a punctured pipe line. She pressed her eyes shut in sorrow and swivelled to the side away from the mourners, lest a relative of one of her workers saw her. As strong as she was, an emotion too strong to suppress was slowly engulfing her. She read the signs and stood up, plastered her bag onto the front of her thighs and began tottering to her car. When she was almost by her car, it erupted out of her, causing a number of mourners to look her way. She quickly entered her car and fetched herself a tissue. The long held tears were now forcing themselves out.

She found herself doing things she referred to as too feminine; jerking to sobs and pressing her hands to her chest as the soft sobs mushroomed into loud cries. She quieted intermittently but relapsed into the pain afterwards. In all, she used four tissue papers before returning to calm. She regretted visiting the gravestone. This was exactly what she did not want to do, cry because of him. It made her feel he still controlled her after all these years.
Not wanting to aggravate her state any more, she ignited her car and headed home.

Chapter 4

Home, she went straight to her room, which was so unusual of her. The routine was to check up on her blue-eyed boy, Joe, before she did anything.

Joe heard her car come to a halt in the compound and expected his mother through his door any minute, but she was not coming. He paused the Mario carts and went up to her room.

He found her sprawled on her bed, gasping hugely yet gently. He knew something was off with her. A son’s instinct was at play. He enquired but from the look of things, she was not in the talking mood. Her eyelids were soaked, making them appear like spikes. He pressed further before she finally disclosed her source of pain that day. Joe was caught between saying do not bother about him too much and the guilt that came with the remark.

No matter how satanic he was, he was the person who instigated his coming into this world. If not for anything, at least, his late father deserved credit for the love-making that fateful night that led to his conception.

Like husband and wife, he lay by his mother’s side and held her hands. A gesture that said ‘don’t worry mother, I’m here for you.’ For the past eight years, that was the first time a male had plonked a body onto that huge bed. The inanimate bed knew it craved for a male user.

The last time Joe slept by his mother’s side was when he was eight. A nightmare brought him screaming to her side so she let him stay by her side.

After a while, he left. She was sleeping, though he knew it was a nap. The workaholic in her would wake her up in no time to resume work.

As predicted, it happened.

She woke up before Joe slept that night, not to work, but read. Another far-out for the day.
Ana would usually work on some few files that needed finishing early the next day during her evenings. She hated procrastination.

A few weeks ago, when Kwame, the guy next door, was with her son, he disclosed he was an aspiring writer, and coaxed her into reading one of his manuscripts. In the presence of her son, she could not turn down the offer, she nodded and told him anytime he was ready he should bring the manuscript, or better still give it to Joe to be given to her.

Ana loved reading as a student. During her school days she would finish tomes within days and move on to the next. It was one quirk her late husband teased her about. Ana had read a lot of romance novels that she was beginning to act like one Harlequin female character; extremely beautiful but coy and easily manipulated when in his presence. All of that was lost. That beauty, coyness, and submissiveness died with him, not physically but character-wise. People change for many reasons: new found love, marriage, having a child, just to mention a few. Hers was too hard to take, which instigated her current bossiness.

She sat by the window and began reading Kwame’s manuscript.

The gentleman had the flare, she admitted. The creativity was also not too bad for a beginner. He would become a good writer if he kept on with the style. After a few pages, Ana wondered why he was finding it cumbersome getting an agent to represent the novel.

She loved the story line already.

Kwame’s face came to memory.

Wonders shall never end indeed.

Nobody would predict such an innocent face to be writing such creative romantic scenes. She squinted and nibbled on her lower lip after one line that made her go wow! She was tempted to look at the direction where Kwame’s story building stood but gave up the idea. He would be sleeping by now. She checked the time. It was late. She rocked slowly the chair as she read on.

Tired after a long while, she decided to retire to bed. She put a pen between the leaves she had reached and placed the manuscript on the side table. She stood up, took a step, and just as she was about passing the slightly open curtain, her peripheral view caught a glow. Naturally, she decided to look.

A gentle spin of her neck brought a figure to her sight. She halted in her step.

‘Holy creation,’ she muttered. The words puked out of her in a reflex. The jumpiness that the silhouette brought parted her lips. She brought her fingers to her lips. The golden lights in the nearest room of the adjacent building had casted the figure of a naked gentleman with a hard on.
It appeared he had just finished having a bath. The projection was quite sharp though, making the owner of the body a no brainer.

It was Kwame, the person she just read.

_Doesn’t he know he is naked, and that his figure is on his curtain?_ The dark shadow appeared to be moving slightly but it was still facing away somewhere inside the room it stood. From the angle she stood, or let’s say from where she was unintentionally admiring, if Kwame turned abruptly, she would be caught prying. She did not want such an embarrassment. It might ruin her reputation forever.

Ana needed to leave her window pane.

Ana had grown pig-headed all of a sudden. She knew she was leaving but her legs would not heed to her unuttered command. Her body apparently wanted more and it had taken the better of her. This was the closest she had come to the nudity of a male after her husband, and heavens have mercy he was quite huge. She was sucking on her lips before she knew what she was doing meant something. She knew if her son walked in on her too, she would be forced to accept his claim that every woman needs a man.

After a minute, her stubborn legs moved away from their transfixed spot. With one hand to her chest and the other holding up the nylon nightie just in front of her groin, she walked silently to her bed. She could not help but burst out in controllable laughs and giggles in responds to what she just saw.

_He is... so sexy though._

A wide grin plastered on her lips as she continued her recollection of all the angles and views of the silhouette that made the hard on extremely long at one time and short the next second. When she was sleeping, she slept with a smile on.

**Chapter 5**

The following day was a normal one, and a normal day for Ana meant too busy in the morning to cook, two or three meetings in the course of the day plus one or two impromptu ones,
lunch, call interior decor about the dinner, and a few other routines. She found herself picturing what she saw the previous night a few times. On all occasions she would realize she had this lustful smile on when she came back to her senses. She would quickly go back to business and Kwame’s silhouette was subconsciously scheduled for after an hour or two later.

*Ana, concentrate,* she advised herself, after emerging from one of the trances.

She nearly brought Kwame’s manuscript to work as a source of stress release, but did not intend on making his business her business. She knew she was a freak. That was why she did not want to relapsed into reading novels again.

When habits became uncontrollable, novels replaced work.

Ana knew all her source of obstructions and would quickly cut them off when they began rearing their ugly heads. Like TV Series for instance, Prison Break spent a lot of her time, to the extent that that would be the last activity she performed in the evening and the first chore she performed in the morning. During those times, she had a companion by her side throughout the night, at least she needed some time away from the laptop that was full of reminders. So Prison Break was her best resort. Brenda Jackson was also the last writer she read. After these two came a hectic and demanding work life that almost always ate into her weekends.

She returned tired, kissed the joy of her life on the cheek when she went to his room, and went up to hers. After her nap, she resumed Kwame’s manuscript. Now, every romantic scene in the manuscript had become a clear picture. She could not help it. Why was her mind playing Kwame in every romantic scene? For some instances her stubborn mind replaced the female character with herself, which brought her close to creatures she had hated for years, men.

After some time, she knew she needed to sleep, but the suspense that dripped off each page was not allowing her. A glance at the wall clock said it was the same time that naked silhouette happened the previous night. Upon the intrusive thought, her body went into a reflexive clench. It made stomach muscles constrict to the cold of the night. She was tempted to pry at Kwame’s again but she decided she would not invade privacy. Why should she be stealing in on one’s nakedness? The idea was quite absurd. She stood up, stretched, and began towards her room. The urge to steal a glance became strong as she neared the window.

The irresistible stimulant swivelled her neck towards Kwame’s window, this time round, she saw something different. Something that she could not understand and explain. What she saw made her swallow some of the glee that she had gathered with regard to Kwame.

Her eyes met two people leaning on the window from inside the room. It appeared to be a night talk. The male figure, the easily identifiable Kwame, but the female figure, she wondered who she was. Ana zoomed in on her. She had never set eyes on her before. After some seconds,
Ana moved to the other end of her window so that she would not be seen prying or probably alleged of trying to eavesdrop on them. Watching with the corner of her eyes, she watched for a while as they giggled and chewed on the pop corn the female figure had in hand. She brought her head back and left the window. Taking her stairs, confusion was written all over her face.

Either he is seeing her or she might be visiting, she countered her conclusion after a while. Her subliminal self had begun speaking out a jealousy she would deny having.

Ana would deny, but she slept uneasy and wary.

Few days passed. One night, in her aloneness, a mouth caress on the soft mounds on her chest flowered them to hardness and itch. They were picked with a downpour of merciless foreplay finesse. In her appreciative squirms, she flew high up the clouds of lovemaking. Her squirms were manic. It was when she wanted to say and kiss his name that she knew they had evaded the bureaucracy of back breaking thrusts. In her peak, disappointingly, she startled awake with her breasts cupped in her hands and her thighs wide apart.

This time, the dream was clearer. She closed up and let go of them in a grudge against the level of her stimulation.

Another dream, she fumed.

Why did she have to wake up when she was climaxing? She turned on her side and began contemplating about her bodily reactions of late. She knew hormonal fluctuations in her groin plus years of celibacy were all coming at her with full vigour. However, a smile disturbed her lips due to the fact that it was him.

Why should he be the one to make love to her in her dream? It has been days since last he came around.

She lay there playing back the dream to herself. Ana placed a finger in her mouth and took a weak bite on it. The other hand took one of the numerous pillows and placed it in between her legs. She needed to wane down the whirl of lust that was still circulating in between her legs. She fought the strong feeling for close to half an hour before sleep came to her rescue.

Chapter 6
That same morning, she woke up to a door bell. It rang a few times but Joe seemed to be far away in his sleep so Ana came down. She opened the door and upon registering the person behind the door, she nearly shouted OH MY GOSH! She did well to hold back the shock. She had not come up against any problems these years, but she was not firewood, blood was flowing in her veins.

It was obvious why Kwame was standing behind her door.

They exchanged pleasantries. Kwame expected her to wake Joe, he was in his outfit to the gym so his mission was easy to read. Ana for some reasons she alone knew, stood at the door with her hands clasped in front of her and was surveying his body.

He sure had an imposing structure. It was the first time Ana had watched him with such surveillance. Those pair of hand-sculpted flesh beneath his tipped nose that he called lips, Oh my.

A lustful urge to pass her fingers over her lips moved to her mouth. She clenched her hands around her chest and swallowed the lust.

‘Hello!’

Her silly train of thought were truncated. She came back to reality and covered a part of her boob that the weak morning breeze had exposed.

‘Hi. Hi,’ she stuttered.

Kwame widened his eyes at her in an unutterable attempt to tell her that he was waiting for her to call her son so that they leave. His eye-widening effect on her was panty-dropping. When he widened his eyes at her, she thought she heard a voice similar to Poseidon’s drawl; ‘Take! Your! Cloths! Off!’

‘Ok, just a minute,’ she gestured with her thumb to inside her building and left. After she finished what was expected of her, she went up to dress for work. She sighed again when she reached her room.

‘The person who was making love to me in my dream is the first person I see upon waking up, wow!’ she muttered and shook her head. Her body felt like it had been injected with a slight dose of high. She felt like a Catholic meeting the Pope face to face on a first trip to Italy. She needed to have her bath. Taking off her nightie, she realized what might have just happened.

Did I go downstairs braless? Oh!
Her countenance was left to regret and some degree of embarrassment. Ana imagined how she appeared in front of him. The picture she imagined was bad; the tiny protrusions at the centre of the two rounded heaps on her chest, whose excitement would not simmer down after her romantic dawn vision.

_Oh! No!

She stood in front of her dressing mirror and watched herself braless in her nightie.

‘Oh, come on, really?’ she drawled in a soft voice she could barely hear. She brushed the scene away, besides, he did not appear to be zooming in at her. _He saw nothing_, Ana concluded. She knew she had been taken away by his presence.

On her way to work, Joe and Kwame had arrived from the gym and were standing in front of her gate. She drove her car slowly out of her gate, turned to her right, and saw the eight wonder of the world. She had always heard of seven, she did not know the eighth was right beneath her nose.

There and then she reduced her speed. Her speed had to reduce because not just her legs had become weak to hit the accelerator, her whole body had already bowed down to his imposing masculinity.

On her right side stood a bare-chested Kwame, sweating profusely and casting a spell-binding effect on her.

He was gulping down some water from a bottle.

_Those abs_, she swallowed to contain the heat that was unfurling in her. Her breath seized.

The way his sweats were revealing the tautness of the contours of his stomach, Ana also felt thirsty. Sweat dripped under the hairs on his chest, joined other standing droplets on their way down his rolling packs, and eventually entered his navel like a golf hole. Sweat had pooled in his navel, with some drips leaking down onto the waist line of his shorts. If she had the ability to stretch her hands and touch them, she would. Ana had just drunk some water before coming out, but the way and manner Kwame’s Adams apple rocked to his drinking made her thirstier.

Joe waved her goodbye but her blinded eyes did not see a hand.

Without noticing, her vehicle began moving to the other lane. She had almost by-passed them when a car startled her with a horn, forcing Ana to manoeuvre a swift swerve away from the approaching vehicle. Both her son and Kwame cringed at the fatal scene. Left to Ana alone the vehicles would have crushed, but the approaching vehicle saw Ana drift off early, thereby managing to swerve from his end. A look at her rear view mirror saw the two talking. She could
tell that Kwame was asking Joe if everything was ok with his mother. She reorganized her over-captivated thoughts and drove on slowly.

That day, she nearly fired an employee at work when he was caught napping.

‘Hey! Mr man, if you miss your matrimonial bed, let’s get you packing so that you go and sleep by your wife’s side at home,’ she hollered when she slapped the sleeping worker’s desk with a file much to the surprise of the rest of the workers. He was lucky he had been a long serving worker. If he were to be a new employee, oh, that would have been it. Despite all these harshness, people still worked for her because she paid good when it came to salaries.

Ana occasionally emerged from touching Kwame’s abs before she realized she was fantasizing about him. She would jerk and as if to check if some inquisitive workers were prying on her, straighten up and resume work. That day, her schedule was not that tight so she brought his manuscript to work and did some reading in her free times. Reading, Ana was all smiles. In her day dreams, Ana’s hands would periodically land on Kwame’s chest when she felt for any of Kwame’s well crafted characters. She found herself doing the unusual in her office, lying on her office table to read. She called it the lazy man’s posture.

Work had almost ended when Joe called to inform her of some good news, which was a displeasure to Ana. Joe was elated, but Ana was seething over the same issue.

‘I will be home soon’ Ana spoke with some decisiveness in her voice and began parking. She had always been against the bond.

Her late husband’s twin-brother had arrived from London. He was on holidays, and wanted to spend sometime with her son, who was his nephew. Anytime he was around, Joe had to leave for some couple of days. This bond between her son and his uncle was getting on her nerves as the years went by. It made her feel that that wicked family she married into was slowly winning her son back. She slammed her hand on her wheel at the thought of this.

‘Wicked people,’ she muttered.

Anytime she came across any of her late husband’s family members in town, an uncontrollable urge to exchange blows with them was what she had to fight.

_I was being married as a second wife and none of them tipped me off. You’d all rot in hell._

She blew her horn at the drivers in front of her at the last traffic light she had to pass before getting home when the light turned green.

Upon parking her car at her carport, she came down without locking it and went straight to her son.
‘Joe, this bond between you and your uncle, I have told you countless times that.’

‘You hate it.’ Joe completed her sentence before she could. Ana was seething, squinted-eyed. Joe wore a face directly opposite his mother’s. A long silence transpired as they both stared at each other. He watched her countenance improve to a normal one before he continued. ‘As you said, he is my Uncle.’

‘Well, they are untrustworthy people. They don’t deserve any pity or love.’ Ana retorted and stormed out of his room. Seconds later, he heard her bang her door shut from upstairs. Such bangs suggested his lioness of a mother was in some different element. She was going to call his Uncle and throw the usual volley of interrogation at him.

‘What do you want with my son this time round, is he the reason why you decided to holiday here, how safe is he around you, are you sure you won’t lie to him just like you people did to me some years ago,’ and a host of other annoying motherly probes. Joe could hear his mother’s raging voice from downstairs as she spoke on the phone. It went on for sometime before her voice receded to calm. Then Joe heard his mother calling. That was the routine, he knew. She would roar like a lion, but in the end, as calm as a cat, she would give him the permission. As he was taking the stairs to his mother’s room a smile was betraying his straight face.

Joe loved moments with his Uncle. The man made him feel like he was already an adult. He would travel to any place of his choice: Nzulezu, the Aburi Gardens, Paga, Kakum National Park, just name them. He would frequently give Joe the privilege behind the wheel, though he was under age. It was one activity he would die for, to drive like all men did. The driver who drove him to school everyday never allowed him the chance. He was under strict orders not to try the foolish idea. With his father’s twin brother, he felt the most alive.

He went to his mother’s room and as he anticipated, she gave him the permission to go. These moments were one of those few when he hugged his mother and did not want to let go.

‘You know I will go to any limit to make you happy,’ she declared whiles in his arms. She informed him that he would come over tomorrow to pick him up. It was about two weeks until school reopened so Joe could use only a week.

Elated, an idea came to mind. He thought of letting Kwame know he was leaving for a week, so that he passes by to check up on his workaholic mother. Maybe she might need some company one of these days that he was going to be absent. Without telling his mother, he dashed out to Kwame’s.

Kwame was always home. Apart from the fact that he was writing, all the CEOs who lorded over his father’s companies reported to him on weekly bases, after which he would email the report abroad.
He was a home CEO sort of. The only time he was not home was when he had a call from a publisher or an agency. The happy Joe beseeched him the favour and without a dot of protest, accepted to check up on his mother as often as possible.

Chapter 8

Early the next morning, Ana was up. It was the only time within the week that she could spend time with her flowers.

She had green hands.

Let Ana touch a dying flower and it would miraculously gain life. She had gloves on and was doing some pruning. Ana would let no one touch her flowers. She had an unusual connection with them. It was only when she was on a business trip or for some reason far away from home that she made a florist come around. The last time she entrusted them in Joe’s care, she came back to a mess. After that it has been her or no one else. Cracked pots were one of her dislikes, she would not sleep until she replaced them. She had almost finished when a car arrived at her gate.

The Security opened the expected visitor and he drove in. Ana stood there watching as he killed his engine. She did not need to be angry before the man knew of her dislike, it was clear to the blind. Joe had already finished parking. The visitor exited his car. When Ana landed eyes on him, she felt like bursting out in tears. Twin brother indeed.

She could bet on her life that that was her late husband standing right there. They were identical: small headed, thick brows, little moustache, brown eyes, humble demeanour, five foot six... They exchanged pleasantries but Ana did not shake the hand he extended.

With a pruner in hand, she watched her son load his bags with some unusual energy. When he was ready, he pecked his mother and they were off. The angry Ana cut short what she was doing and walked back into her building. She could hardly be herself when her son was in another person’s care. She put the gloves somewhere and threw herself headlong on the sofa. She gasped and began thinking about possible ramifications of his son’s time away. Fortunately, nothing came to mind.

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Listening to the radio, she lay there for sometime before moving to the kitchen to cook herself some food. Another habit she disliked was employing the services of a cook. The last time she did, the cook almost burnt down the house.

Why would you send a five-year-old to the gas cooker? Five-year-old Joe turned on the gas and held on to it for a long-time without lighting fire. The whole building was smelling of gas before the kid saw a match box on the kitchen marble. Coincidentally, both Ana and the cook reached there just in the nick of time before Joe could light a stick. That was the cook’s story.

With Joe now away, her day went quite slow because she had little to do. Time seemed to have paused. She finished working on a few documents early in the morning and made some calls pertaining the annual dinner. The rest of the day was left to her use. She tried her hands on a recipe she had heard of, which made her spend few hours in the kitchen. After eating, she went out for a walk with her dog in a bid to clear her head off work and issues at home.

That evening, Ana was reading when her door bell rang.

Who could be knocking on my door as of this time?

She did not hear any car come in so the person was most likely to be on foot.

A peep through her peephole and she knew she was not herself anymore.

She cleared her throat lightly, wore a new smiling face, and opened the door. They smiled at each other before Kwame said ‘Hi.’ Ana responded and informed him that his little friend was away with an Uncle of his, since she thought he did not know about his absence. Kwame explained that that was why he was at her door. Ana did not understand, but since she thought they were talking already, she invited him in.

They sat and began a nice chat. Kwame was a good chat as well as a good listener. That was the first time the two had had some drinks together. A giggle here and a laughter there was all it took to make Ana’s day. It was half way into their conversation that he disclosed that Joe had told him to keep an eye on her because she overworked herself at times, so his presence there was to check up on her.

‘Oh, ok’ she responded after the disclosure. ‘that is so chivalrous of you.’ He responded with a nod and a nice smile. Ana needed a rescue team at this point, she was drowning in his smile. After that, Joe became the topic of discussion.

The kid had a kind heart and many prospects, they agreed. He complimented her on a good job done in bringing such a kid up as a single parent. Ana’s head was like that of her building when these remarks fell off his lips. Looking into his eye was one act that made her want to go to
the loo so she did her best to keep her eyes away. She found out that Kwame looking at her was like sun rays were falling on no one but her. His smiles made him look like the sun rose and fell on him. The gentleman’s gaze was making her grovel inside.

As a romance novelist, Kwame could make a lady feel like heaven with just his compliments, and Ana was no exception. She swallowed in her blush for the third time when his smile at her sounded like ‘you are the prettiest creation I have set my eyes on in a while.’

She tried returning some of his compliments but found herself struggling to say something that sounded like a compliment.

Ana was not that good at the game.

For instance, when he told her how he admired her zeal for work as a woman, after a while, she wanted to tell him she also admired the originality in his words when she paused. After the word ‘admire’ left her lips she could not take her eyes off of his. Ana drifted into a daydream. She stared at his mouth and thought of how it would feel on her skin. She quickly emerged from the dream she last had and completed her sentence. Ana was mostly worlds away as they chatted. As though she was not watching, she needed to take his features in slowly before her brain told her that her memory was full. The influx was well beyond her faculty.

*We have been neighbours for some months now, how come you are suddenly looking this irresistible?* she was debating while he did some talking. In her eyes, Kwame was glowing with male hotness.

*Holy Mary!*

It went without saying that he was a hot cake in high school. She was flapping her legs as if to cool down the heat that was brewing from in between them. A few times Ana would ask him to repeat himself because she was fantasizing about him at some beach resort where he was tossing her up and down in his arms.

Around eleven o’clock that evening, as their conversation appeared to be losing its pace, a few yawns here and there suggested that he needed to leave. However, they both appeared interested in where the chat was headed to. Now that they were talking about his writing prowess, he appeared in his elements. He explained and digested certain terminologies and jargons to her in the writing profession. After a while, Ana’s eyes became so heavy they would literally not open. He watched her struggle to stay awake. Surprisingly, he offered to read her something to sleep, which Ana did not hesitate to say yes to.

He began reading. It was a piece he had written. His voice sounded like a lullaby in her ears. It tickled her brain to sleep before she knew.
Chapter 9

Around dawn Ana woke up, not on the sofa she last saw herself on but on her bed. A bolt of surprise flashed in her chest upon realizing where she was. In the dark recess of her bedroom, she wondered how she came upstairs.

*But how tired or weak was I, to the extent that I would not budge when carried in his boisterous arms. Am I that dead in his arms?* she marvelled.

She tried sleeping again but her attempt was unsuccessful. She realized it was one of those nights, when she woke up and could not sleep again. Lying in the awful coldness on her bed, Kwame began invading her thoughts.

It was a romantic hangover, a weak spot that she did not know she was growing fond of. She recalled how he was looking some hours ago when she sat adjacent him. His sweatshirt was a perfect fit on his torso, leaving no ounce of his flesh undisclosed. With a side of her cheek on her pillow, she wore a naughty smile as she took in the clarity of her recollection.

*Boy! Boy! Boy! You are something else. What is it about you that is casting me into this deep well of captivation?*

And each time he rested his elbows on his kneecaps and stalked forward slightly, *Oh! Gosh!* she could hardly hold back the urge to have a feel of the tautness of his arms. She felt like a thirsty flower that had received it share of a spatter of rain when he flicked his eyes at her. A look from him brought a new kind of life in her.

Ana was still tossing and squirming to pictures of the previous night when an idea came to mind.

It was not a bad idea though.

Initially she wanted to give it a try but a voice told her the idea was too dicey to bet on. She put her phone away. After some failed attempts to sleep had elapsed, the business woman side of her decided to give the idea a try, besides, nothing happens without an action. One had to take an action before one could be branded a success or a failure. She scrolled down her contact lists to
the K column. She tapped on his name and began to text.

‘Hey,’ she buried the phone in her hands and hid it under her pillow. It was a reaction that said she was doing something that was highly unusual of her. Few seconds later, it vibrated to a reply from the recipient.

‘Sleeping beauty.’

Ana beamed in correspondence to the beam of her screen and the message that came with it. She coiled her body like a millipede and brought the phone closer to her face. She sent him a smiley.

‘Do you wake up this early?’

Ana replied, explaining why she was up that early. She wanted to ask how she walked to her bed but the answer was obvious. As though he could read her mind, a text came in as she was thinking about the how.

‘You look like a goddess when you are sleeping.’ She flashed outrageously and bit on her lower lips. She was about replying when another came in. ‘You should not overwork yourself too much, you are already a top-notch.’

‘Well noted, Sir. Can I ask you a favour, please?’ she replied.

‘Sure.’

‘My company’s annual dinner is in two days’ time.’ Her request was clear. She contemplated on the effect that the short notice would have on his response. Kwame seemed to have gone offline before her message hit his phone. She waited for over twenty minutes but he did not come online.

The tweets and chirps of birds woke her up in the morning. Sun rays had silently burgled into her room, burnishing the stinking rich luxuries into existence. She bounced out of bed, realizing she had overslept. After her shower, she took her phone to make a call. Her screen had a message notification. She opened it and it was Kwame’s.

‘Sure, dinner then.’

She smiled. She walked to her locker and checked the dress she would wear for that night. It stood out amongst her collection. She had to leave for work before she was tempted to try it on for the thousandth time after the idea of Kwame accompanying her popped up.
Chapter 10

Ana was not the type that used make-ups, but on the day of the dinner she wanted to try something different. She came out something different indeed.

She appeared like a divinity.

It was all angelic white. Ana wore a white one shoulder bodycon knee length, a feather white CZ choker with earrings to match, and a white wedge to complete her outfit. Her purse rested under her armpit as she tottered to Kwame’s car.

As she walked towards the car, she remembered what he texted her when it was time to be ready.

‘Your outfit might have many uncontrollable ramifications, one of which is making me lick your skin, please, don’t dress to that effect.’

Ana muffled the laughter that came with the thought and yanked open the front door. She sat and said ‘Hi’. Kwame responded and pretended he was about licking her arm. Ana flinched and cachinnated. Kwame joined the fun. She shook her head when the laughter had almost quieted and shot him a look that said ‘you are one funny guy you know!’

That was the first time Ana saw Kwame look at her in obvious admiration. It was clear her appearance had had a lightning effect on him, striking him so hard that his eyes flared as he looked at her. Similarly, Ana could not calm herself as he took her in. Her hands rested on her purse that was on her lap, while her legs flapped to betray the anxiety she was trying to hide. For some seconds, he sat in the car admiring her. She etched a smile on her face and rocked her head to the beat of the music that was playing. Jason Derulo’s trumpets. Ana turned after a while and met his gaze. The look on his face said that he had never seen Ana in such a happy mood before.

‘Looks like someone can’t wait to dance,’ he inferred and started the car. Ana did her best not to ruin the smile she wore but nodded a half-hearted yes to his inference. The rocking of her neck to the beat vanished so fast that, one would not say there was music playing. She realized that after all these years, she did not know how to perform one act, dance. Whether it was azonto or salsa, she knew nothing. She had spent all her time burying her head into work.

She had no social life.
She smirked and resumed her beaming face. The mere fact that she was a zero in the dance world was not ruining her night, not today. She began rocking again. This time she hummed along. Kwame could not help but grin when the humming began. He admitted there was more to know about his young friend’s mother.

For the first time in so many years she became slightly tensed when they arrived, but Kwame was fine. He had now taken over the hum baton.

He was doing some Beyoncé in his throat.

The car pulled off near a separate garden that was a few blocks away from the gathering. The speakers were playing a slow romantic saxophone jazz, which had enveloped the place with some lovers’ aura. He held her hands for the first time. Their fingers, as if those parts of their bodies had been waiting since creation, clasped around each other.

The manner in which the clasp took form was so natural.

A slight squeeze from each other spoke to the silence; *I am here for you*. Ana sighed.

Why was she tensed and jumpy?

She had been attending this annual event for close to a decade now since its inception. Was it because she had dressed to kill the night? Or it was because she was double for the first time after several years of attending the dinner alone?

Joe hardly accompanied his mother because of school. Another reason was that Ana thought bringing him along would expose him to bad boys like Vodka and Whisky, who she wanted her son to have no relationship with.

They began walking on the hedged pavement towards the already cheerful enclosure. Ana’s curved hips, which appeared to be tearing her outfit apart, were making hits on the side of his thighs as they walked. She felt like her lungs were empty when they had almost reached the red carpet. She was losing her breath. Slow but sure, they walked to the carpet.

Before they could pose the camera men had completed countless clicks. Kwame stood straight with a smile whiles Ana held her waist, with her behind softly nudging at his groin. Changing their style, they stood arm in arm, and other poses that Ana did not know she could.

When they finally arrived at the large gathering, the surprise that was written on the faces of her employees was not because she had brought someone along for the first time, but because of her appearance.

Her vital statistics were glaring in her outfit.
She left a few lips ajar and eyes agape. Some jumped out of their skins and went to her side to propose a dance. Some quickly notified others with their eyes to watch the beautiful witch who queens over their work place. The effect was so profound that immediately they entered, the cheer in the air reduced drastically. Ana needed not to be told that she had marred the merry momentarily. Knowing this, there was no need raising up her head. They went straight to an empty table. Drinks were full on every table, and most tables’ drinks had been half drunk before they arrived. Most of her workers used this opportunity as payback time for their salaries that they thought was not enough. They had to drink into her account.

Meanwhile, a few inquisitive ones had already begun an investigation. They appeared as though moving from one table through the few dancers to other tables, but it was all an attempt to raise eye brows.

*Is he here just to accompany her or the witch had finally found a wizard with a broom she loved?* They were thinking. Some saw Ana smile for the first time since they were employed. The guy brought something new out of her, they inferred after her unexpected grin.

Smiles, teases, and jokes brought Ana showing all her thirty-two. She had not emptied a glass yet. Impulse, when unnoticed, can make one act strange. She found herself cracking jokes too. Where she had the jokes from, she could not tell. They came to mind effortlessly. A few thought she was under the influence of alcohol, due to her wanton movements. Ana willed Kwame to have a drink but he reclined and turned down the offer.

Apparently he was quitting the act.

Unfortunately, there were no non-alcoholics around. The least available was thirty-five percent. Ana apologized but Kwame said there was no need for any, she did not know he was quitting so she had nothing to worry about.

The two were the first to take their share of the buffet. Eating, she watched the strong muscles in his jaw move to his grind. This made the muscles of her stomach stiffen.

*And which barbering shop did he go to?*

The hair from his finely shaped beard that went up the side of his cheek to the front of his ears appeared slim and blade-sharp. He complimented the food. She nodded and told him they were one of the best in town. She asked if he wanted more but Kwame said he was fine. He added that just the aroma could satisfy the hunger.

All that while, Ana had been fighting a stubborn urge. The urge to steal was so mighty. She did not want to be caught stealing a swift glance at him. Especially when she knew the attitude of some of her employees. Her employees could talk, she knew.
After the food, she gave a short speech as she usually did every time. As she did, Kwame stared on. Ana could see with her peripheral view that he was staring. This knowledge intermittently brought smiles to her face at instances where she was speaking about serious issues at work. Where they expected her visage to be serious, she was smiling.

Some had begun whispering that something was definitely wrong with their CEO. She fidgeted like a novel, just because a set of pressuring eyes were standing between herself and her composure. As she stood there, she could not wait to finish and sit. She could literally touch the pressure that he was exuding at her. It was calm, penetrating, and persistent. His stare had the strength of three hundred Spartan soldiers behind their shields. When she saw that Kwame had added a grin, the situation became worse. Her legs felt like collapsing under her familiar heft. Her wedge also lost more balance as seconds sped into minutes. It took her longer than usual to finish her speech. They saluted her with a clap offering when she ended. She sighed when she had settled in her seat, and dapped her sweating nose.

Unlike the previous years, all she showed up for was to give her speech, hang around for a few minutes, and she was off. She did not have the time. Besides, she could not have a conversation with anyone about business, she was ahead of all of them.

Kwame complimented her on the nice speech when she was calm and collected. She said thank you in a rosiness that had no bounds.

Another conversation ensued. Kwame could hold a smile on Ana’s face for close to ten minutes. As she watched him, every word that came out of his mouth was toothsome. There was no room for a flaw. His uh-huh and aha was a delight to hear.

As the chat developed and diverted to other areas of discussion, something came to mind. She wanted to ask but the effect of her enquiry on the merry was unpredictable. Messing up the fun was the last choice she wanted to make. In her obvious attempt to hold back her unasked worry, her lips shook. Kwame asked if there was any problem. He could read the worry on her pretty face, but Ana said no and resumed a smile, she knew her visage had betrayed her. It was too early to be asking such trespassing questions. Asking about the lady she saw with Kwame, Kwame might interpret her query for something she did not want him to think of. It might most likely tell Kwame that she was into him but she wanted to know if there was someone else in his life. She brushed off the killjoy.

Ana had a liking for fireworks, she could not help but take his hands as the explosions began. Each time the rockets exploded, Kwame felt her tighten the grip on his hands. She could not take her eyes off the colored flames and sparks in the sky.

Moments later, it was time to dance.
Ana felt a chill run through her whole body when couples began dancing.

*Mercy me, what have I landed myself into?*

Sweat broke out on her nose, forcing her to make use of her handkerchief. She knew she definitely had to join the crowd anytime soon. She vented a decisive sigh. The more time she spent sitting and smiling at those already on stage, the more a message she did not want to send became clear to Kwame; when it came down to dancing, she was abysmal.

Every second counted here.

But what dance move did she know? None! She swallowed the imminent embarrassment and decided to take the risk. Before she could let out a word, Kwame had stretched a hand with a smile. The smile said you were itching to dance in the car, let me help you scratch off those moves. She took the bait and bounced to her feet.

Another reason why she had never danced at this occasion was because the last person to ask her to a dance, which was years ago, was fired a week after, so her employees likened the act to a sacking letter. From that year on, no one dared to ask her to a dance. Under firing circumstances, no one had ever received a golden handshake from Ana.

A lot of brows rose as they joined the few dancing couples. It was another novelty. She had never danced at the event before astonishment had a lot of room.

Just as she was turning to face him when they had found a nice spot, she missed a step, and an inevitable fall was obvious.

**Chapter 11**

Before she could think of falling, Kwame hardened his grip, his other hand took the other side of her waist with a natural flare, making the trip look like a dance move that they planned to start with.
Few wows left the lips of few people. They loved what apparently looked like Ana’s first move.

Ana bumped her torso into him. She spent a second on his chest, musing over the fact that she nearly fell. The disgrace that would have accompanied the fall if not for Kwame’s skill, would have been a perpetual aftermath.

She was not a shy person but if she fell she would not be able to raise up her head when walking through her ocean of employees at work. The profound silence that would have accompanied her presence the next working day would speak volumes of this fiasco. She pulled back slightly and let her gaze rocket from his chest to his face. He was wearing a grin and looking down at her. Ana knew what the grin said. She suppressed a laughter and dropped her head back to his chest. After her wedge had bought her some height, only to his chest was the height her shoe could catapult.

Kwame was a tower.

Now that she had settled, she needed to conjure a dancing move from nowhere, or perhaps quickly learn from others who were dancing. She bit her lips as her eyes scanned around for a move she could start with.

She had begun moving when the DJ came to her rescue with some jazz.

This truncated her bounce to the previous Chris brown that was playing. It left her the last person bouncing to the previous music. She was a late comer. Everybody had a fast switch to the jazz. Kwame whispered into her ears if the DJ had brought all her moves shattering to the ground. His lips touched her earlobes in the process. The effect of this contact was monumental.

She felt like she had been injected a dose of sugar into the vein that passed in front of her ears down into her neck.

It left her dumb temporarily. This made her shake her head, a substitute for the ‘mm’ that could not be uttered. They smiled at each other briefly. The intimidating appearance in his eyes forced Ana to rest the side of her cheek on his chest, as they slowly moved left and right to the tunes.

Another teaser came knocking into her ears moments later.

‘You should represent your company in a dancing competition.’ This time, teasing lips made just one contact with her hyper-sensitive skin. This made her want to sleep. His body massaged better than her bed. A foolish urge told her to squeeze him further into herself and never let go, but a change of music brought her back to the reality of being surrounded by employees. There
was no room to day dream. How she wished they were alone somewhere. She threw her gaze back at him again and said thank you. The shape of her lips after the ‘you’, was as though she wanted something. This time round, they stared at each other for quite a long-time. Her mascara made her look like a fairy character. She was attractive to the dregs. Ana was swimming in the black pool in his eyes.

Up close, Kwame admitted.

*You are a goddess of beauty,* his scattered brain was doing some confession.

He was staring at a fair woman who disturbed his sleeping muscles with every blink of hers. Her breath alone was worth tasting. It was simply irresistible in the night. Ana had an oval shaped face. She had a pointed chin that Kwame admired dearly.

‘You are not a bad dance partner too.’ Ana wanted to give him a taste of his own medicine.

‘You are better.’ He smiled.

She felt two gigantic arms squeeze her tighter into himself. The squeeze had a demanding edge to it, but it was her body’s reaction that made her swallow hard. She was a bundle of activated arousal. She felt comfortable and uncomfortable. The former for the fact that it had been more than a decade since she felt anything like that, and the latter for the fact that they were in the middle of a gathering. Her fingers clenched into a weak fist. A sign that she was fighting herself, but how could she fight what her body apparently could not let go off? For the purpose of pretence, they had performed extremely well to keep their smiles on, so that people would suspect nothing. Yet, the mounting affection was gradually eating away every aspect of their pretence. Like a drop of hot water onto a sugar cube, her body was melting horribly. The hug was growing inextricable. Consequently, her bosom felt like bursting under the pressure.

*No, we cannot do this.*

Ana had begun panicking. The looming finale was certainly going towards uncontrollable. She needed a way out. Kwame would not stop smiling and narrowing his gaze at her. For a while now she ceased to exist each time their eyes met. If their eyes met again with his lips parted once more, she was sure she would tear them apart with a whopping kiss.

*Such a sweet worry you are.*

She shook her head with her stare well away from him. Some killjoy needed to bother her with something related to work.

Someone not in his or her right sense to bother her with work at a dinner? She knew she was bound to wait for an eternity. Her stars came to her rescue with a name. She used joe as an
excuse, which Kwame did not say no to. She had to call him.

Chapter 12

A reluctant separation ensued after she asked to excuse herself. Ana realized the full extent of her want when their bodies parted. It was a fierce battle. Her gingered bust was fighting her bra seriously. They were protesting for a release. They loved their position a few moments ago. At another end of her body, hell had broken lose. It was a total pandemonium. With each step she took, some sexual demons wanted to force their way out around her waist region. They had been inactive for hell too long. These and other wonders of her body confused her totally. She could not breathe normally. She was losing her breath.

Normalcy began regaining control of her when she heard Joe’s voice.

The voice of a dear one indeed. He was fine. Joe realized it was one of her calls, just to hear his voice. He teased her to stop stalking and hitting on him. Ana smiled and shook her head.

‘You are crazy,’ she said with her teeth clenched. Since he became friends with Kwame, the rate at which he teased his mother had witnessed an upsurge. She asked how his relationship was faring with his stubborn Uncle who would not stop coming around. His response made her more uncomfortable. Especially when she could feel the smile on his face. Everything was fine. She advised him to be extra careful because at times solace was the best way to deceive. Joe blinked slowly with the phone to his ears and nodded. He knew his mother was being her normal self. Due to her life experience, she was a real Cassandra when it came to his relationships with girls. She said bye and ended the call.

She examined herself. Normalcy had resumed everywhere. From now forward she knew well how to relate to Kwame. He apparently was one romantic catalyst that she should not tamper with. She tottered back to the gathering.

When she returned to his side, something struck her. She realized he had not taken any drink that night, which made her curious. She queried tactfully.

Kwame was abstaining from alcohol. It had been a while he took some. He was not an addict but he knew how he behaved when little alcohol entered his body. He had the worst Dutch
courage. Alcohol was a virus that multiplied by the second once in Kwame’s body. He could not control it. He explained.

Ana was wearing an ambiguous beam after he had finished explaining. He looked like a child who was explaining why he stole a piece of cake at his friend’s house. The wanton charm on his long face was widespread. She had to pull away her stare from him as he gave reasons for his abstinence. She understood, but as she sat nodding to the music, she thought about the exact opposite. Just to be an eyewitness.

*Is he that wayward when he takes some alcohol?*

Ana shot him a sunny stare. She had decided to try him. Kwame stared back, trying to decode the reason behind her shine. His attempt was unsuccessful. He pleaded with her to start talking. He could not wait to hear what she had to say. They held the stare in place for some seconds before Ana moved.

He watched her take the bottle of vodka, an empty glass, and began filling the glass. When he registered the smile on her face as she poured the firewater, her intentions were made clear to him. He threw his head back and reclined in the chair. Kwame began a giggle, which exploded into laughter. Ana joined, as the laughter made her shoulders quiver.

‘Ana, please! Don’t do this to me!’ Kwame pleaded undertone. She leaned in with the glass in hand. He pressed on with his plead but Ana insisted he gulped it down for her.

‘Do it for me please!’ She winked at him. She would be the one to hold the glass as he drank. He fired at her a pleading childish face but Ana retaliated with her own version of a baby face, as though if he did not take it she would cry. By this time, every speck of courtesy that reminded her of the presence of the function had been dusted off her.

Whether someone was watching or not, she cared less.

Looking into Ana’s eyes, Kwame saw sheer determination, and had to give into her abjuring request. She watched him as his lips slowly kissed the rim of the glass. As he swallowed, she swallowed along. As though she was drinking from his hand-chiselled lips. His countenance crumple to the sharpness in the vodka. This made Ana laugh horribly. He settled his countenance to a smile and shot Ana a devilish look. She pouted when his look locked on hers. Ana pressed his arm twice as if to console him. Afterwards, she suggested they left the gathering and take a walk, which he readily agreed to. They both had itchy feet and a walk was surely going to help.

*Chapter 13*
He followed her out of the ongoing merriment. She had been at this venue more than a couple of times so she knew the environment quite well. When they were outside, their hands instinctively found each other’s again. There was no danger in sight but they felt they needed each other in the dark. Neither talked nor hesitated. She chose a path that led to the meadow.

The strong breeze of the night blew back her hair, revealing her small head from Kwame’s viewpoint. They were walking against the direction of the breeze. On top of that the stellar decor of the sky had provided a beautiful scenery of the whole place. They walked in bright darkness. The moon’s vigil was well noticed.

The field had an evenly undulating landscape, so that for every fifty meters they either were on a small uphill or a shallow valley. As they climbed one of these, her sixth sense told her that he was staring.

She checked and she was correct.

The glint in his eyes was the evidence. They were fixated on her. Lightheaded, she laughed gently and almost set off to a run. Kwame licked his lips and began.

‘I never knew you could be like this,’ he confessed. She turned playfully at him but did not utter a word. Ana had always known that truth was in alcohol. She only lifted her brows as a sign that she had heard him.

Kwame hated the fact that the vodka was setting in, but it was already in his system, he could do nothing about it.

‘Come to think of it.’ She turned to listen. He stretched the other hand and she took it with delight. They both squeezed lightly. She pursed her lips as he did the talking. Ana was now walking with her back but was facing him. ‘What if you had fallen today?’ He smiled brightly. Ana threw her stare away from him, contemplating the possible consequences if she had landed on the ground. All were not too good. She had glimpses of smiles all over her face as she thanked her stars for bringing him along.

‘Thanks once again for your skilful catch, I am glad you came.’ That was how slow and tactful she could come to saying that they should change the topic of discussion to a more romantic one. She dropped her stare briefly and flew it back to his face. However, she could not hold the stare for long, she had to drop it.

*Oh boy you are damn handsome.*

She sighed under the power of his God-given looks. At the same time Kwame also thought of
his own version of her beauty. She was a to-die-to-be-with.

Kwame had a long face with plenty of hair that had been well shaved to a fine moustache around his mouth. His hair was well cut for the occasion and was replete with waves. It glimmered occasionally under the influence of the moon. His Adam’s apple was constantly at work. It rocked to every utterance that he voiced out. Kwame had a heavy baritone voice that always caused vibrations in certain sacred places of Ana’s being. The voice commanded immediate effects on her effortlessly. Additionally, every time he talked for a long time she appeared as if listening attentively, but the truth was that she was lost, lost in and around his lips. His ash suit also made him appear angelic in the night. Ana at some moments felt overly secure in his heavenly presence.

‘Can you do me a favour?’ Ana wanted to read the request on his face but he was unreadable at this moment. The vodka had altered his visage lightly.

‘Sure.’ She nodded in addition and bridged the gap between them to half. Her eyebrows knitted in anticipation.

‘Would it be possible for me to catch you again?’ he spoke flatly.

‘Catch me again, how?’ she was confused. Ana thought Kwame had now found his dancing shoes. Her eyes were the widest he had ever seen them become. The urge to kiss them and tell her she had pretty eyes was all over. The appetite was literally screaming at him to dap his lips on those set of blinkers. Her lips were still rounded and parted after the ‘how?’

Kwame left her hands and squinted a little. Blood from nowhere rushed to Ana’s lips. Her tiny lips suddenly felt heavy and swollen.

Is he going to catch my lips with his?

She swallowed and threw a leer over his shoulders. She wanted to take off into the skies but gravity did a good job on her. Kwame’s hand moved around her hips as if to touch her and survey her curves upwards but he did not.

Rather, he prickled with his middle finger at the side of her waist.

This caused Ana to snake to one side of her body, so that her other side joined shape with her already outstanding hip. She still could not catch what he meant by catch you again. Then another prickle came at her other side. She twisted herself and then started moving back. Kwame closed each gap with a step of his own. His steps were that of an assassin’s who had his target to himself in a room. Ana now understood what he meant by ‘catch you again.’ They both broke into smiles. Ana’s mushroomed into laughter. He stretched and prickled her again. This time she
twisted herself so that his impact was minimized. He did not know he was injecting long-lasting excitements into her already disturbed system.

‘Kwame please,’ she pleaded amid uncontrollable laughter.

‘That’s your gift for the vodka,’ he disclosed. ‘Now who’s going to save you?’ he threw his arms wide to indicate that they were the only people out there on the meadow. The music from the dinner could be heard from a distant. She pleaded again with her hands clasped in front of her but Kwame was in the mood. He would not listen.

‘Talk to the hand!’ he waved at her jovially.

‘Oh! my G… What have I landed myself into?’ she threw the question out loud when she realized that he would not stop.

He tickled her until she had no option but to take to her heels. She held her dress around her thighs and turned around. Running, she was laughing so much that she could barely move her legs. She was such a beauty to watch. She ticked all his boxes of a goddess. Ana had the wisdom of women. She felt as free as a bird. Kwame delighted in running after her in the dark. Each time he caught her, her pleas were like honey. Most of the time he would jovially ask to tickle her one more time before he stopped. Ana would begin running before he could execute his last attempt. During those times he would hold her at the waist, as it appeared to shrink and expand in her lungfuls. In spite of his lovely worries, she loved the fumes that came with his utterances when she was that close to his lips. His intoxication had made his eyes look dull and sleepy, but he was a package of energy not willing to sleep anytime soon. The night appeared to have a lot of prospects.

At last, when he also was tired, they stood at one spot in each other’s arms. She leant against his trunk of a torso. Her lungs needed to work some overtimes to replenish the lost oxygen. She was extremely slaphappy that if he should ask her the colour of her panty, she would not hesitate to shout. ‘LACY WHITE!’

Their bodies bobbed against each other in the cold night. Though cold, she felt nothing close to it. By his side, nothing came close to his presence. Cold felt like quilt warmth in the harmattan season.

After some minutes, Kwame bowed and scooped her off her feet.

Her surprise brought a ‘wow’ to her lips. She looked up at him only to meet his firm gaze locked on her. In safe arms, she decided not to talk but just relax and let him do whatever he wanted. He was taking her to the hilltop nearby. He ascended with no difficulty at all, making Ana wonder if he held something that had weight in his arms. Ana felt something most people
will describe as falling in love. When he had reached, he sat himself on the ground so that he faced downhill. He deposited Ana onto his lap with grace.

For the first time, she felt the large expanse of his thighs with her womanly backseat.

His lap was fully occupied. He dragged her in so that she had a firm grip of his lap with her cushion. As humble as a cat, she submitted herself to anyway he preferred her to sit. The tip of her hip now invaded a bigger part of his groin. Her arm stood in between the side of her trunk and his concrete abs. In suit and tie, she could still feel the waves of his packs. Placing her head on his shoulders, she fondled herself against him like a cat trying to draw the attention of its owner. His collar bone pillowed her cheek. This made one side of her lip have great difficulty sealing. They stayed open under the fragrance of his aftershave. It was here that Vodka did some talking.

Chapter 14

‘Let me ask you this, if I should pick from a million women, yourself inclusive, whom do you think I am going to pick?’ Ana forced her lips close to prevent the smile that was gushing out. She did not need to be told the treat in his question. Vodka looked down at her before red cheeks had the courage to look up. She blinked like a hundred times. When the urge to kiss his eyes had begun boiling in her inside, she tossed her gaze aside.

Ana wanted to bare her heart out to him.

In his arms, the strong willed Ana was the weakest. Kwame was a land of plenty that she could hardly resist.

‘Based on what criteria?’ blush was speaking.

‘What do you think they have that you don’t?’

Ana’s gaze had dropped to her lap. It appeared as though she was not listening but all she could manage was to dance to his utterances.

‘Is it your comely forehead that creases like the waves of the ocean each time you look up at
me?’ What sobriety conceals, drunkenness reveals. Surprised he had noticed the crease of her forehead to a lovely effect, she looked up at him.

She watched his stare move from her eyes to her forehead in sheer admiration. He returned his gaze, which forced Ana to drop hers.

‘Mm? Tell me. Or you think someone has more spellbinding eyes than yours?’

At the sound of this, she went wide-eyed. Not because of the nice treat, but because of the sameness. All her life she had come close to only two men: her late husband and Kwame. What just slipped off his lips was sweet yet terrifying.

_Spellbinding eyes._

She recalled her late husband using these exact words on her just a week before he passed away.

_Oh no, he will not cheat on me, will he?’_ Her face was as stoic as possible.

Ana, after her late husband, had likened any similarity to sameness. If anyone came close to sharing something similar to her late husband, that person was branded heartless, a cheat, a big liar, and other names in her world of bad men. For Kwame, she resorted to sheer coincidence and coiled into herself. He pressed her into himself to shelter her from the chill in the breeze.

‘Maybe someone might come close to your pretty little nose but certainly not your lips.’ At the mention of her lips, a reflex twitched her upper lip. She was tempted to touch her own lips but declined. She realized he spoke living words. Words that had the power to touch her physically. His words were already caressing her. A fight had begun between herself and the effects of his words. It needed not to be said that her losing prospects were becoming clearer.

He spoke of her lips again, which run her mouth dry. She swallowed the unadulterated lust that had come to hang on her lower lip.

‘How do you bring that to fruition?’ he asked.

‘Bring what to fruition?’

‘Keep me glued to your lips each time you are talking.’

_Oh boy! Stop talking, please._ The voice in her head was close to a whisper. She twisted her lips to succumb the effect of his words. He watched Ana toy with her fingers like a kid. Ana loved the feel of his heavy breath on her forehead each time he breathed. She knew if she looked
up at him again, she would not be able to withstand the sweet temptation. She was bound to kiss off every compliment on his lips just to spare her the word ‘tease’ if he looked up.

But it was the last move she wanted to take; kiss him when he was intoxicated.

*He could be mad at me when sober.*

She buried her face into his chest to battle the compulsion. She used just a little make up so his suit was safe. Her breath had switched temperature to warmer.

‘Do me another favour please?’ his baritone tasted like Japanese jollof rice. This time she actually thought she had been kissed because the vibrations were palpable. The vibrations that buzzed in his chest as he spoke, had electrified her completely unexpected. She then realized burying his face on his chest so that her lips touched him was the worst idea. She licked her lips in pepper-hot relish.

Ana wanted to utter the word ‘Go ahead,’ but each time she tried opening her lips to talk, the words ‘Go ahead and want me,’ wanted to come out all at once. She tried ‘ok,’ but ‘ok touch me tenderly,’ had taken a shortcut to his lips. ‘Ok,’ was now descending. Ana was giddy. She had forgotten she could go for a simple nod. Eventually she did, but even that, she nodded to his request three to four times more than the number she decided.

‘Would you please make me have a feel of your chin?’ he gestured with his thumb and index finger.

Petrol wanted to touch fire, and fire was itching to flare up. Her head felt like bursting. His pamper was majestic and royal. It had this unique treat to it that only he could make her feel. If this was the closest he could come to telling her he loved her chin, then Ana thought she also had the right to ask for a feel of his lips. Though she felt asking for that was too manly for a woman. It was men who asked for that so she dragged that idea under the rag. She took a breath, pouted, and looked straight ahead, so that he could see her looking.

‘Feel free.’ She closed her lips fast to prevent herself from saying something like ‘Feel free to tease them with your basket balling fingers.’

When he had almost touched her, Ana’s lips were quivering horribly. The effect his fingers wielded on her jaw was none but magnetic. She was not a land so hers could be called something like a jaw slide. The lips of a kid who has craved for a particular candy the whole year would not shake this much when he finally had a candy as Ana’s did. When he held her pointed chin, the quivers reduced slowly. Her body had found an antidote to aloneness. He felt it recede to a quick calm. Just feeling it, he was not satisfied, he wanted to taste them. He then went ahead without permission. With his fingers, he toyed slowly to have a feel of its smoothness and cuteness. She
could not help but flower her lips into a smile and savour the feel of his fingers right beneath
them. She closed her eyes and rested her head on his chest as they took each other in. If the night
could go on forever, she would want to be there until thy kingdom came, especially when the
breeze had almost disciplined itself to a corresponding slow.

‘Which one is it? It is either God forgot he had spent enough time on you or you were created
in his leisure time.’

He creased at the forehead, squinted at her, and waited for an answer. She could see in her
peripheral that he was staring at her. She bit her lip and shot him a lightning glance. She was
beaming like a firefly. All that Kwame saw was the flash of beauty in her big eyes.

Under strict reflex, she rested her palm on her chest. Kwame needed not to be a prophet to
know that that hand was telling him he was such a sweetheart. Silence ensued after this. She
wondered if he was sleeping. In the silence, she would intermittently glance up at him to meet
his fixed stare at her. She would always giggle after each glance, which caused her body to buzz,
sending vibrations into Kwame.

‘Hey, say something!’ she said, after his stare went robotic.

When his words were alive and could touch her, Kwame, that night, left her whole body in a
state of excited confusion. His words never failed to have effect on her. When his conversation
drifted towards certain places, she could not handle it. When he was finished with her, her chest
and bra were in fierce riot. Some other undergarments had begun a protest to go on strike
effective immediately. The lovey-dovey mood had erased and replaced all the negatives in her.
Hope hang in the air.

Behind the wheel, she needed to go as slow as she could, else, the arousal could make her
speed beyond the appropriate limit. Almost home, Kwame wanted to dance again. Vodka was
not satisfied for the night.

Chapter 15

She turned up the volume of the woofer just so they could hear Lionel Richie. Her home
seemed to have given her some comfort and freedom, as she pulled up a move or two that
impressed Kwame a lot.

The smirk on his face was a silly tempt.

Now that they were in the confines of a house, Ana’s body was going out of control and she asked herself if he felt the same. She needed to keep her legs close. Her heaviness was weighing her bra down and she fought miserably not to take them off. Her waist and thighs did a great job holding down the position of her intimate things. At a particular point, she looked up at him in total defeat, she had failed miserably to her feelings and emotions.

‘Ana,’ Kwame zeused and collided his forehead gently against hers. She felt like Hera all of a sudden.

Their noses kissed.

‘Up there in your room, awaits a chaste bed that has never squeaked to any intimate deed, neither has it heard your moans in decades.’ She thought she heard him talk. ‘Baby girl, let me take you upstairs.’ Ana wanted to scream HALLELUJAH! She was losing her mind. Her lungs were failing her badly, but cold air from nowhere passed on her nose, which reminded her that reality and trance were worlds apart. She had left the world to non-existence. When she emerged from her disorganized thoughts, they were still dancing. Lucky for Ana, he was not staring. A killing disappointment engulfed her.

What in the world is happening to me?

Vodka had after sometime become uncontainable. Kwame needed to retire to bed. Too weak to move a leg, she helped him to his feet. Kwame was a building. She did not have that strength, so she decided to plonk him on Joe’s bed. At least his room was closer than any room in the building.

When she finally did, she removed his shoes, loosened his tie, and a few buttons. After his tie, Ana was stuck. She could not move her sight from light pink colored, parted lips. He was fast asleep. If she went ahead to taste the rarity that hang on his lips, he would not sense a stimulus. She swallowed and scanned around, forgetting she was in her own house and they were the only people. She passed her hands on her face and settled them on her lips. She shrugged and left his side. She looked at him for the last time before she turned out the light and exited the room.

She made herself some tea, with a couple of glances at the direction of Joe’s door. She could not believe that she could feel how she felt after all these barren years. She buried herself in her thoughts a few times and only realized that time was far spent when she emerged from them.

When she was about sleeping, she recounted all the euphoria that she shared with him. She
went bananas with laughter all alone in her bed, wriggling and turning in her recollected peaks of their thrill.

She felt in love again after a long-time.

Lost time enjoyably been made up for. She prayed nothing went wrong between them. The last thought on her mind before she fell asleep was him. She convinced herself that she was the last image on his mind before he also slept, though he was drunk.

That night was fast, probably because she did not sleep early. She woke up and the first mental picture on her mind was Kwame. She needed to check him on if he was fine. She descended the stairs in high spirits and elate, the sources of her state, most obviously from the previous night.

She knocked but there was no response. It was first light so it was possible he was still not up. Maybe she should not have forced him to drink, but would he have been that romantic and crazy if not for the drink? She just wanted to know if he had no headache or serious hangover. She knocked again and it was just as silent as the first. After the third unresponsive knock, she decided to enter. She opened the door and the first sound she heard was music. Kwame had turned on the radio. Apparently he was up already. She cocked her head in and found that he was not on the bed.

*Has he left to his house without a goodbye?*

She came in and closed the door but did not lock it. She now took inquisitive steps. Blinded by love and ecstasy from the previous night, she turned to the right.

What her eyes saw bounded her to the spot. *Sweet fruits of Eden!* she exclaimed in thought. Her mouth run dry and the muscles of her stomach clenched in spellbinding reflex. She was looking at the eighth wonder of the world.

It was a golden opportunity on a silver platter.

And from her position, she needed to leave before he turned around; in the stew stood Kwame, with suds skating down every sinew and muscle of his. The golden lights made him gleam like a god, and she wanted to worship him with her all. Coincidence had also brought her to the room braless. There were abnormal fluctuations in the pleasure centres of her brain. Her nightie appeared as if they were being drilled at the breast region. A voice told her to tear her dress apart and join him. She moved a step closer, her eyes were seeing stars and golden clouds.

Kwame stopped the shower. When he began towelling off, he thought he saw a shadow in the room.
Ana?

There was no response.

Chapter 16

Ana pressed her back against the door when she came out, wide-eyed. The silence in the living room was screaming pleasures at her. She tiptoed back to her room and then straight to bed. A creak would give her away, it appeared. She closed her eyes and thanked her stars when she heard nothing from Kwame after a minute.

He did not notice anything. She concluded.

Rock-hard body. Hairs fallen like they were deforested. Buttocks appearing like he was a god of war... These and other intruding memories bothered her that early morning.

If he did not take the risk, she will. She made a mental note to.

She felt she had seen it all. The impatience to explore his body under the shower had covertly started but she failed to realize.

After about half an hour had elapsed, Ana descended downstairs with some new confidence. Something she hardly needed in her own house but had to muster because of the apparent situation.

Kwame came out to a strong redolence everywhere in the living room. It was mouth-watering and nose-blowing. Whatever was being cooked was definitely worth tasting. He concluded it was being cooked for him before he decided to follow the ubiquitous. He had wanted to change his dress that gave off some fumes of alcohol before introducing himself that morning, but the whiff said he could do so regardless of his intoxication.

He walked in on Ana with her back facing him. Her arm was rocking as she beat the egg. Parts of her body shook to this movement, making Kwame stare lustfully from behind. Stealthily, he came closer and took Ana by the waist.

The startle that he caused was whale.
She felt like being handled by a masseur. If not for the fact that he held her by the waist, she might have vanished in rapture. She joined the laughter after realization.

‘You should not be doing that!’ she threaped lightly. Kwame apologized in a whisper. Still with her waist filling his palms, he deleted the gap between his front and her behind. Goosebumps erected everywhere on her skin. In his arms, she was a new creation, renewed, invigorated.

‘I can’t wait to taste you,’ his voice had a murderous lace to it. Ana looked him over her shoulders and they could both read the ambiguity in his utterance. Two set of eyes collapsed down onto two set of lips, one hungry, and the other full of satisfaction. They built up to each other’s eyes again, then his face beamed. Ana grinned and continued cooking breakfast. She discerned it was intentional.

Under his watch, her cooking prowess were like never before. She was like a maid whose employer had walked into the kitchen for the first time after her employment. Ana impressed naturally. Her culinary skills were begging to come to life.

‘What’s the bad girl Ana thinking?’ he poked, but all she could do was smile and shake her head.

‘You don’t stop teasing, do you?’ She had begun twisting her body slowly, so that she felt his huge palms with her sides. Kwame pleaded that he be released so that he quickly changed his outfit and perform some petty chores. Ana kept mute as if she did not want him to leave her side for a second.

‘Please bae?’ he pressed softly. It was a lovey-dovey form of baby. Ana coughed a laughter. He had begun coining flatteries for her.

‘Don’t call me that, we are not in high school.’

‘Ok baeboo!’ he forced another laughter from her. She knew he would not stop until she said yes.

‘Alright!’ she waved him off to leave.

‘THANKS SO MUCH BAEBOO,’ he shouted to Ana’s hearing when he had almost exited the building. She also cachinnated to his hearing, turned, and stood akimbo. She shook her head in his direction and wondered if he ever understood the word stop. Bae, for reasons she did not know yet, made her swollen-headed though. It made her feel like some daddy’s girl. She loved the sound of it, especially when it came from him.

In pondering mood, she debated how her son would take these developments in his absence.
Would he take it cool or oppose to it? And why? Ana hoped for better.

Kwame returned with his laptop and a book in hand. Breakfast was already served. They began eating.

Ana would not stop feeding him, so he also decided to return the favour. He would make her open her lips for fried egg but would tease the morsel right in front of her open lips. Ana would grab his hand and put it in her mouth in those instances. He would feed her until she shone her eyes at him to signal it’s ok. She would give him the look that said ‘seriously?’ but Kwame would care less. Mouthful, he would make fun of her visage. She would retaliate in similar fashion. She would goad him when his mouth was full to the extent that he could barely move his jaw to chew, especially when she fed him berries. They laughed until they did not want to quit swimming in the pool in each other’s eyes. Silent moments would transpire when her lips gave her away. Her lips seemed to love every contact his fingers made to them. He would retrieve his finger, with his gaze at those two sleek crescents she called lips, as though if given the chance, he would spend an eternity siphoning all that it bore.

Anxiety flapped her legs beneath the dining table the whole time.

The unspoken obvious made the slightest contact jumbo; the fact that they had the whole mansion to themselves. She heard her mansion screaming at her to make the most of the moment on few occasions.

She did the dishes in five and returned to his side. He laid his gratitude at her feet for breakfast and for the night before. Ana responded that it was all nothing, and she believed he would do same for her. He nodded in agreement.

Ana now felt it was ok to ask him about the female figure she saw him with the other time. She also wanted to ask if he had any girlfriend, before she fully committed herself to the unstoppable developments that was unravelling between them. It could spoil the fan but delicate issues of these nature needed immediate answers.

Kwame took his apple and flung it open. Ana cleared her throat. She was preparing what she concluded a blemish. Kwame willed her to come over before she could disturb her countenance to a questioning one. She returned the smile and came closer. It appeared he wanted to show her something on his laptop. It was not so, he actually wanted her to sit on his lap. She did not hesitate to move over. He sat Buddha style before she moved over. This provided enough seat for Ana, considering the size of her behind. He helped her with his hands at her waist. Kwame had come to love the sharp contrast between her waist and hips, the former looking very thin, and the latter appearing womanly cushioning. His hand always had a seat to rest on when he held her. Ana’s shape always reminded him of his hour glass that stood on his working table. Ana fitted the word ‘hot’ and satisfied all three letters.
She was Hankering, Ornate, and Tempting.

She landed her globes on his spread laps and coiled her legs just like him. Yet still, she was not taller than him, but they were almost of the same height now.

He placed the laptop on her lap and logged on. He gently shoved her to rest on him and placed his head on her shoulder so that they both could see the screen. He asked her to be his muse for the day and Ana said it would be her pleasure. He opened an unfinished manuscript and began writing.

**Chapter 17**

The little contacts that his well-shaved beard made on her neck did more than just a contact. He made her read the paragraph that preceded where he had reached after briefing her on the plot.

Ana loved the plot.

Typing, she would make suggestions, some of which he would take. The ones that he could not take, he would explain to muse why he could not. A little insight into the writer’s world had already made her day that morning. She asked a lot of questions, all of which he answered. She spoke a lot of wows mostly after every enlightenment. After a while, she realized that her hand was up in his hair, under his beard, by his cheek, and into his hair. She had been pampering and racking through his hair all the while but her consciousness had kept her in the dark. On the other hand, Kwame had loved the movements of her fingers in and out of his hair. She was massaging his brains, and it awoke all his creativity.

_How did my hand reach there?_

She tapped on his head to ascertain the reality and she felt a human being. They had come close to the extent that their cheeks appeared inextricable. They could hear each other breathe.

_Did I doze off or something?_

She kept her calm and suggested a few on the scene he was writing on.
‘You stopped for a while, I thought you were asleep,’ he stated a question. Ana looked at him, he paused and looked back at her. This was the closest they had come. Her lips were a hair’s length away from his. They were helplessly paralyzed under such influential closeness.

*Oh my, you should see yourself when you part those lips.*

Kwame was looking like a tard as he thought about her. He just could not taste them yet.

Her fingers reduced pace and slugged on his head. She knew she had to hold hers and not let them fall to his lips else she might blather in her response.

‘Sorry, I was not, I was just lost in a thought, that’s all.’ Her eyes oscillated left and right to his firm gaze. He joked that he seriously needed her assistance at one point in time but she dejected him.

‘Where?’ She turned to the screen, expecting him to show her. After his fingers did not move, she turned back to him to meet his smiling face. She chuckled and rested against him. A paragraph later, Kwame said he was tired. He closed the laptop and placed it beside him. Ana asked if she should serve him some drink or water but he responded he wanted her and only her in his presence. She beamed and coiled back into him. Kwame seized her with his arms. She held his fist when he clasped them in front of her stomach. She was at peace in her inner self, Kwame had begun feeling the same.

 Barely a week ago, their status was at best, next door neighbours. If they were asked now, they would not be able to accurately place themselves. They were journeying towards honey and sweetheart. They both knew the journey had commenced long-time but it was more romantic in its unspoken state. They sat in glad mute for a while, both of them slowly swaying from side to side. Kwame was humming some cool. Ana closed her eyes in the name of love and beamed grace.

‘You shouldn’t do that again.’

She flicked her eyes open.

*Do what?* She tried ideating what he was talking about but nothing came to mind.

‘What please?’

He tucked her into himself and she melted with immediate correspondence. She had no say in her body’s reaction.

‘The last time I saw you in your nightie,’ he stated.
Ana’s body went stiff, every muscle cemented. She had caught the embarrassment but she was taking it in small doses. The last time she was in nightie was that morning, when she chanced on him under the shower.

*Did he see me? Oh no!* She taught he did not.

She conceived the shame and decided to apologize. She felt she had tarnished her image, stealing in on one’s nakedness. She would probably not be able to look him in the face again.

It was one thing she hated doing, apologizing. Not that she was arrogant, but getting herself into the apology mood, which usually came with that sorry look was what she was not good at. The last time Ana had to apologize to someone was years ago, at one of the annual dinners. When she unintentionally caused a worker to trip. When she was apologizing with all seriousness, her visage was like one who was happy for an achievement. That worker surely did not forgive her, she knew, but that was her best. She could not act any better.

In that split second, she prepared her apology speech and was ready to flow.

‘I-’

‘The last time I came over to call Joe for jogging,’ Kwame made clear what he was talking about.

She nearly said ‘thank God’ that he was not talking about the incident that morning.

She remembered, but there was nothing offensive or blame worthy she did that morning if her memory served her right. She needed some information, she was confused. Ana’s expression said all her confusion. She turned slowly to his face. Kwame noticed that she needed some filling in.

‘Braless.’ Spasms took their place in her bra when the word landed in her ears. ‘You were braless that morning,’ he spoke silently.

Ana now remembered. She closed her lips, turned around, and rested her head around his neck and chin. She vented a sigh that he could not interpret. She felt the disturbance on his cheek when he smiled. She also smiled and wetted her lip with a swift tongue slash. She knew he wanted to pull her legs but he was welcome.

‘It’s been a while I fought but you made me fight that day.’

*Where are you going with this one?* she blinked.

‘And I hardly lose fights, but you made me lose,’ he added. Ana was still blur. She was yet to
grasp where he was headed to.

‘I fought not to hold you that morning,’ his voice was that of one who had suffered. Ana felt sorry for him. She did not realize that he had brought something new in her once again. Ana was wearing a sad face for the first time in the millennium. Something she could hardly do. Anyway, she recalled clearly that he showed no signs of being seduced or tempted. He was ok and did not look her at the chest for a split second.

‘Your timing was perfect,’ he informed. Ana knitted two brows to show her confusion. ‘If you had spent another second in front of me only God knows what would have happened,’ Ana was numb. She clenched a weak fist.

‘You won then, nothing happened,’ she spoke with barely a sound leaving her mouth. He chuckled at her ignorance.

‘I took a step towards you immediately you turned, but I stopped in my impulse driven stride.’ Ana looked up at him for confirmation. There was no room for jokes on his face. He was talking serious.

Sorry was all Ana could say. She sounded like one who was about to cry.

‘Don’t say. It’s ok. At least I learnt a good lesson.’ His baritone had added on some extra bass. ‘You are one arcane beauty. Thank God I am part of the few that know how beautiful you are.’ Not knowing how to respond or what to say, she relaxed in his soothing talk.

The moment was growing magical by the second.

Though it was day time, the environment that day was quieter than usual. His Adam’s apple budged. Kwame wanted to voice out all he felt. He had been considering some feelings for sometime now and had made up his mind. He wanted Ana.

‘Hey,’ he spoke so that Ana swivelled her neck.

They were face to face.

‘Don’t you think it’s high time I told you how I felt about you? he sounded like a baby who wanted his mother. Ana’s mouth run dry all of a sudden. She felt consumed by something way beyond words. At least, it was spellbinding, engulfing, benumbing. She did her best to gesture a single nod as her answer. Her eyes appeared beaten and weak.

‘Come here,’ he took her head and rested it on his chest so that he rather looked down at open lips. His hands stayed there, on her cheek. As he admired the beauty, his thumb began gentle strokes in front of her ears, which appeared ever so bland. She could not help but close her eyes
under his anointing. The power was invincible, rendering her insensitive.

‘Would I sound like I am just flattering if I told you that you are the prettiest living entity I have set eyes on my whole life?’

She opened her eyes, taken aback by the truth in his confession. She wanted to shake her head for an answer but his telling had weakened her in great proportions. He noticed her effort. Every word Kwame uttered now sounded like nothing but from deep within a genuine heart. She felt his heart beat with unusual strength. He was using up a lot of energy to tell his truth.

‘And you know I can spend a lifetime admiring you right?’

Ana’s visage was saying ‘Kwame stop it. I might die in your arms.’ In her high-waist skirt and crop top, she crossed over her leg.

‘Let me be the one ok? I beg of you. Give me the chance to show you how much you are worth to me.’

Ana was completely dead by this time, her walls broken down to the barest foundations. Her inability to respond left Kwame uncertain. He did not know whether she wanted him to be the one or not. She appeared dazed and lost in fairy trance. Nonetheless, it was not going to dissuade him from what he had wanted all the while, to have a feel of her lips.

With her eyes closed, she felt some candy warmth on her lips. It tasted like manna on the lips of an Israelite. She was sure as egg was egg, that it was a kiss.

Am I being kissed? she mused.

She returned to reality in a snap. Upon opening her eyes, it was just his index finger. Kwame wanted to verify the smoothness of her cuties, if they corresponded with how they appeared. Unfortunately, they did not. Her lips felt overly smoother than what the eye met. It was a beautiful deception that Ana herself did not know. This time round, it was Kwame’s hand that was shaking to the power her lips wielded. A sick person would not shake like how his fingers shook. She watched him swallow with a savour. It was crystal, he wanted them. He wanted them fiercely. The delay was killing both parties.

He reduced the distance between their lips. Ana watched on as if unconcerned.

‘Would you kiss me back if I kissed you?’ His voice had devolved from baritone to raspy. Her lips had apparently sucked out all the man in his voice. His question wetted Ana’s mouth. It registered slowly in her mind. She was about to be kissed by no other. After the registration, her body grew impatient. What it wanted was in the offering. She also flew her arm up and rested her palm on his cheek.

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Chapter 18

She piped up with the energy a slave would use to say thank you, after being served her favourite dish. Their gazes collapsed to their lips. A battle between hungry and hungrier was imminent. Two necks began racking towards each other.

Their lips had almost reached bliss when a car honk startled both of them, Ana the most startled. Then she recalled. She had woken up that day to a text message and a miss call from Joe.

He was returning that day.

She was blinded by the mirth and gladness of the previous night so she did not reply after seeing the notifications. As a matter of fact, she beefed that Joe was coming back too soon, yet she was the same person who did not want him to leave.

The honk was so strong that they thought the driver intended to stop their kiss as she virtually jumped off his lap. Muscles ticked in Kwame’s jaw, a sign that spoke of his unsaid blow. In that moment Ana stood confused, not fully back from kiss world. She did not know whether to say sorry for the French that almost materialized or for not telling him Joe was returning that same morning.

The sound of the car’s engine died a few yards from the main door.

Kwame did not want sweetheart to go through any stress so he willed her to go for the door, which she did. In her strides her behind caused more chaos in Kwame’s already hare brain. The V shape he was looking at was brutal.

Ana was beautiful, from behind and in front.

Why was he dreaming of mortals while angels with such rare value slept in the next house every night? He raked fingers through his hair. Kwame was in love with her. The way Ana walked alone spoke volumes of how caring she was.

Ana met Joe in open arms. Her son was back home. The look she gave the driver spoke
albums of her dislike towards his master, her late husband’s twin brother. The driver did not say a word. The message that was given him to relay to her, he had to forward that through Joe. He did not want to ignite her muted fury.

Kwame stepped out a few seconds later. Joe was delighted to see him as well, but his return had all of a sudden planted some sort of fear in Kwame’s chest.

‘Mm, taking care of my mother as I had hoped. Thanks buddy.’

Kwame laughed softly and said it was nothing. He exchanged quick glances with Ana as he helped Joe with his luggage. How much he was in love with her was all in the glance, and Ana could read it. She beamed as they walked behind Joe.

It was for their own good that they did not kiss, because if they had, who knew, they might have drifted so much so that they would not hear the car honk or Joe walk in. The pull between them was lusty and whopping, especially on Ana’s path. It had been more than a decade and a half since she felt anything like this, so giving herself up, it had to be in the most perfect time.

From that moment on, the thought of her lips on his was an instant turn on. Kwame could not take his eyes off her.

The three sat in the living room, Joe sitting in between them. He shared with them his time away. As the chat went on, Kwame took his phone, texted, and put the phone back.

Seconds later, as Joe was doing the talking, Ana’s phone buzzed. She read the message, closed her opened legs, and flashed at Kwame.

‘Lol. Stop doing this, Joe would notice,’ she replied.

Moments later, her phone buzzed again. She read the message and swallowed both lips. She pouted her lips in her attempt to hold back the burst. She could hear Kwame’s voice in her head as she read every text.

‘We can’t make love in Joe’s presence. Stop it ok?’ When Kwame received this text, his reply made Ana want to dash over and tear his lips into pieces in a passionate want. Her fingers were constantly finding the wrong letters in her reply.

*I libe tu... She deleted and took her time. I love you more.*

Up to this time, Joe was still oblivious to what was going on between his mother and Kwame.

That day, after Kwame had left, Joe noticed something. His mother was not her usual self. The focused and quiet Ana had switched to an overly lively and highly spirited one. He
wondered what had taken place in his absence. The most lucrative deal that had come her way in her business life, if his memory was right, did not gaga her this much. All his life, he had never seen her listen to music in the kitchen, with earpiece on and humming to Ariana Grande. Something had definitely induced her into walking side to side. He thought it was just for a moment, until he heard

‘MY HEART WILL GO ON AND ON!’ A new Celine Dion had arrived. The titanic theme was not the best considering how it went down.

Ana was singing.

Those vocals were actually coming out his mother’s lips. Joe watched her from a distance with wide eyes, unbelievable.

*This woman is slaphappy.*

She had crossed the red line and she had to be investigated.

That evening, at about quarter past seven, when Ana would usually sit behind her laptop and attend to some files, Joe walked in on her listening to music. She was sitting on her bed, knees to her breast. Joe had been standing at her door for close to thirty seconds before she startled to his presence. She took out the earpieces, her lips still syncing to whichever song that was playing.

‘You scared me,’ she stated the visible.

Joe walked up to her. She shifted so that he could sit by her.

‘Any problem?’

‘Yeah. A big one,’ he answered with his stare aside. Ana braced. She knew something had definitely gone wrong when he went over to his Uncle’s place. She sighed in fury.

‘Did he hurt you?’

He shook his head to signal a ‘no.’

‘Did he say something?’

He gave her the same reply. With his delay, Ana felt like giving him a dirty slap for the first time in his life. He knew his mother so well that he predicted a squint. He turned to face her with a smile and he was spot on. He could barely see her eyes.

‘You are the puzzle,’ he informed. Ana flinched.
Puzzle?

He mounted a set of brows to reiterate what he just said.

‘I have been trying to work you out all day but I have failed.’

Ana was lost. Joe loved sarcasm and wisecracks. Owing to his mother’s marvels, he figured it was best he approached this issue his way.

‘You’ve not been yourself since I returned. What happened in my absence?’ he questioned his mother like she was his wife.

Ana grasped where he was driving at. She planned to tell him later, when the bond between Kwame and herself had taken on wings. The silence told Joe he was not far from right. Something had indeed happened. Ana decided to aver.

‘Kwame.’

That was the best she could do. Joe thought he heard another name apart from Kwame. He turned to face his mother.

‘It’s Kwame. Kwame and I.’

She blinked a few times. Her demeanour said Joe should say something. A gleam beamed up on his face. Joe began smiling. Ana began smiling in response. It was one of the happiest responses a mother could receive, when one’s ward was happy with a relationship. It was tantamount to a father’s blessing in marriage. He took his mother’s shoulder from the other side and shooed her towards himself.

‘Lover girl!’

Ana did a belly laugh to fill the whole room. Their heads rested on each other’s. In the quiet, she asked him if he was fine with the bond between Kwame and herself. Joe only nodded, as if thinking it through.

He pecked her good night and left for his room. Nevertheless, she was not sleeping anytime soon, especially when the Joe aspect of her concerns had been cleared, she would chat until daybreak if time permitted her.

She chatted Kwame until around twelve midnight.

It was all smiles, sniggers, chortles, and joy. Kwame made her glow in the darkness for a long-time, smiling at her phone’s screen. The night brought a unique addition to their texts. They
could feel a text seconds before it arrived. At the peak of their chat, when their conversation had fully drifted elsewhere, they wanted to just come outside, hold each other, and let the cold dictate for them. This was not made possible because the rain had begun a few minutes ago, and did not look like waning any time soon. This made them want to sleep four legged the more.

Quilts were not enough for the time being.

He could sense her pretty smile from a block away, so could she. Eventually, the both slept with phones in their hands.

Joe was first to wake up the next morning. He was furious, seething. He would not let his mother experience it for the second time since it could break her forever.

‘Tell her the truth!’ he cracked at Kwame.

Kwame sat and passed his hands on his head. He appeared confused, tardy, and out of options.

Joe knew something that his mother did not know.

Chapter 19

The next day was a quiet one. It was work as usual for Ana and typing for Kwame. However, typing was not as smooth as always. He did not flow like when she was in his arms. It was a horrible day for him. He had to act and act fast. Just the idea of Ana knowing could jeopardize everything that had transpired. He should have desisted from falling in love with her in the first place. He slammed his torso back to the sofa in regret.

Kwame was bound to be engaged right before he left the States to come and take care of his father’s business. All the arrangements had been made until his father became an emergency, forcing him to leave abruptly. Tasha, so much in love with Kwame, would visit him on the regular basis. Kwame had equally been in love with Tasha until he spoke to Ana in the dark recess of the meadow. That is where he also fell in love with her. Though he was drank, love knew not the line between sober and drunkenness. Love is unconditional. From that day forward, his every thought had changed from Tasha to Ana. The sad part of the story was, Tasha’s family
and Kwame’s had known each other for centuries. In fact, Kwame’s father, if he should be sincere, could attribute the source of his wealth to Tasha’s family. Tasha’s father had been of immense help to Kwame’s. So marrying her was surely going to be the best gift both families could offer each other.

He closed his eyes in woe when he reflected on how Tasha would take this heart breaker of a news. He knew his father would be gravely disappointed at him, so would Tasha’s family. However, their disappointments were not going to release him off his current infatuation.

Kwame was desperately in love and it could not be shattered.

That whole morning, he had not texted Ana. She had left for work early because she had deadlines to meet. She could not also text him in her haste to leave. He concluded she had not texted him because she might be extremely busy, not because Joe might have told her anything.

He had begged Joe not to tell his mother anything. This was because he was surely going to disclose what he knew to her after confronting Kwame.

Joe, during the initial stages of his friendship with Kwame, met Tasha, whom Kwame introduced as his wife to-be.

Joe had already started blaming himself. First and foremost, he should not have left his mother in his care. From his stand point, he appeared to be the orchestrator of this concern.

That day, Ana did not hear from Kwame. The next day, his gate was locked. On top of that, his Security had no idea where his employer was. All attempts to reach him proved futile. She did not know his email address yet so she just had to try calling. All her text messages were also not replied.

On that day there was no cause for concern.

_Maybe his battery had died in a long journey._

Though this might be possible, why had he not said something before leaving? This was what made Ana slightly uneasy. A simple text would have fixed everything. Working, he was consuming her thoughts. Kwame was everywhere. Despite the intrusion, she could concentrate, at least it was not too troubling. When she closed, she glanced at her phone for a sign of any notification. It had none. Upon reaching home, she enquired from Kwame’s Security and receive the same reply, he also had not heard from his Madam.

Two days later, Ana could not take it any longer. Kwame would not leave her to sleep. She would close her eyes and he was there in the dark. Oodles of sweet dreams were begging to play in her slumber. At work, she needed to concentrate. There were loads of work to occupy her
thoughts, but she always ended up thinking about the exact person she did not want to think about, Kwame. Ana was one-track minded.

Two weeks later, Ana had begun growing lean, and Joe could tell. His mother was not herself. Kwame had certainly taken a huge part of her away. He also wondered where he was but nothing came to mind. She was getting more broken hearted by the day. Thoughts of disappointments came at her in a constant barrage.

*Is this his best way of saying goodbye or ditching me?*

Ana thought she felt something good with Kwame until his abrupt disappearance, and besides, they had just begun. In some unbearable times, before she knew, her fingers would be touching her lips, savouring the closeness his lips came to hers before the interruption. She knew if they had kissed she just might have been dead from the hunger he would have left on her lips by now. Everything happens for good, she came to agree. She would swallow hopelessly and continue whatever she was doing in sadness. She had already conceded that she was back to solitude, and that she was only good for disappointments.

School resumed after two days.

When Joe was leaving, he pecked his mother so many times that she almost became concerned. The pecks were telling her that everything happens for good but she failed to discern his warm codes. Joe left. Ana was left to her huge mansion. She now had to endure two forms of emptiness. She would regularly check her phone for notifications but would have none. It had been a long-time since she sank to this dreg of despair. Only a man could sink her this deep.

**Chapter 20**

The next day, Ana was reading through a document at work when her new personal assistant knocked on her door. She waved her to enter. When she entered, she informed Ana that she had a visitor. Ana told her to usher her in. She resumed reading the document. After a minute, Ana looked down at the large working area to see who her visitor was, a white female. She was most likely a representative from a foreign company. Ana gestured a sign of the cross joyfully.

She thanked God for the open door.
At long last her company was gaining recognition overseas.

*Hard work definitely pays off,* she told herself.

She sat upright and straightened her dress to welcome her visitor. Her assistant opened the door for the visitor to enter. Ana was already grinning, but immediately the white lady saw Ana’s face, hers crumpled into pure hatred. The face the visitor wore could kill. Her voice could be heard from miles away.

‘SO YOU ARE THE ANA BITCH, AREN’T YOU?’

Every worker stopped working to satisfy their curiosity. Those at the far back stood to have a clear view. The shock made Ana’s personal assistant forget to close the glass door. She had joined the tourists of inquisitors. Ana was also totally taken aback. She was wide-eyed.

‘Sorry?’ Ana thought she did not hear what her visitor said. Setting scrutinizing eyes on her, something told Ana that she had seen this lady before, but she could not remember where exactly.

‘ALL THAT YOU ARE GOOD AT IS TO DESTROY SOMEONE’S HAPPINESS BECAUSE YOU’VE NEVER HAD ONE? WHAT KIND OF DEVIL ARE YOU?’ The white lady had tears in her eyes, she was seething red hot. Her cries sounded like one screaming from the torments of hell.

Ana stood up and slowly pushed her glass table aside. They obeyed, thanks to the wheels under them. It appeared Ana was slowly getting ready to chew her offender alive. When her personal assistant saw that she was up on her feet, she tried calming the white lady down but the holler that she received as her reward almost made her soul run away from work.

‘THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR RUINING ALL THAT I HAVE.’ The white lady brought with her an arsenal of assault but she decided to cut short the fiasco. She turned round and began to bolt out the place. Ana was whooping heavily. Everybody watched the stranger as she slammed the door on her way out. Then like a command, they all swivelled their heads to Ana’s direction up stairs.

Ana was stunned. She knew she had not ruined anybody these past few months. She had stepped on nobody’s toe neither.

*So who the hell was she?*

Ana sat and gathered her disturbed mind together. Her stress killer had always been coffee and milk. She resumed work but spent half of the day musing over the humiliation. When she closed and was leaving, she could hardly raise her head. She was enveloped with shame. She did
not need to be told that they were sniggering.

‘Every dog has its day,’ a worker told another when she had left.

Half an hour later, she turned onto the last curve that introduced her house. She noticed that Kwame’s gate was open. She felt jumpy but rode on. When she packed, she came out quickly and went for her gate. She wanted to verify if indeed Kwame had returned. Ana had almost reached Kwame’s gate when a car she had never seen Kwame use slowly made an exit. She noticed there was a lot of luggage in the back seat.

Was Kwame leaving again?

Liquid had begun moisturizing her throat. Fortunately, the car came to a stop. She also stopped in her strides. Ana watched the driver’s mirror roll down slowly. Her whole body seized in a stiff.

When the mirror was completely out, she could not fathom who she was seeing.

The driver’s gaze was that of vengeance while Ana’s was that of shocking awareness. The driver read Ana. The look on Ana’s face went without saying. Ana now understood all that was happening.

She knew that she was now broken hearted.

How could Kwame do such a thing.

She had been through a similar situation fifteen years ago, and now, she apparently was not at the receiving end but at the orchestrating front. She read runes.

‘What have I done?’ Ana soliloquized.

She entered the compound without a hi to Kwame’s Security. She just yanked the door open when she reached the front door. She walked in on Kwame with his hands on his head, and eyes fixed into the ceiling. It appeared he knew what he had caused and was agonizing over the tattered nature of the situation. It was obviously out of hand now. He heard footsteps and enquired who had walked in.
When they saw each other, Ana wanted to repeat the fiasco the white lady manifested in her office but she controlled herself. She wanted to know first. Kwame swallowed and threw his gaze aside. His face was etched with shame.

‘The white girl who just drove out of your compound, she was at my office today.’

Kwame was surprised.

‘Who is she?’ Ana asked with impatience.

Kwame took in a deep breath.

‘WHO IS SHE?’ Ana cracked.

Kwame was not moved, rather he wanted to console her because he heard a cry in her voice. Watching Ana cry would be a total heart-break for him. The last move he wanted to make was one that would make Ana cry. He stood up and crumpled his shorts with his hands. Ana still had her sight drilling into his eyes.

‘Sweetheart, I can explain.’

‘Don’t you dare sweet-talk me! I am not your sweetheart!’ Ana retorted and clenched her fist. Her fighting instincts were soaring above the clouds. ‘Answer my question!’

Kwame’s lips moved to an utterance but before a sound could be heard, Ana chipped in.

‘I won’t sit!’

Kwame sighed.

‘We were bound for engagement until I fell in love with you,’ he disclosed in a voice that lacked boldness. He rose his gaze from the ground to Ana. She was flaming in anger. Ana lip-synced what Kwame just said with a wild squint. She did not consider the latter. It was only the former she deliberated on. Her conclusion; she was the cause of a break up.

She had destroyed another woman’s peace.

She felt deeply for the white girl. Ana had become exactly what she had been preaching against all her life. A hypocrite, she had become. Her body was bobbing to her slow pant. She was losing her breath, it appeared.

‘You were bound for engagement,’ she repeated.
Kwame uttered a soft ‘yeah.’

Ana felt sick.

‘And how long have you known each other?’ Ana was afraid of the answer to this question, because it could tell the magnitude of pain the white girl felt.

She braced for it.

‘Since we were kids,’ Kwame spoke with pain.

The room fell into deafening silence.

Ana blinked, when she opened her eyes, a pool had gathered in front of them. Let her blink again and a tear would trickle down her cheek.

Growing up in Oklahoma, Tasha was his one and only. The bond between them was magical when they first met each other. Nothing was going to tear them apart.

‘Love is something beyond my control,’ he constantly told Tasha. ‘So nothing can come between us.’ Tasha would beam in his face and kiss him with incessant love.

When Kwame enrolled for writing school, it was Tasha’s father who paid for all his expenses, from enrolment fees to the last school fees. It was unfortunate Kwame’s father’s ailment began right after writing school. So he had to visit Ghana frequently, and eventually base.

Kwame pictured what was going on in Oklahoma by now. His family and Tasha’s would either be brooding over the break up or would be at loggerheads with each other. They were all expecting them to marry. Marriage between them would have been such a great crown for the two families, considering the fact that Kwame’s father and Tasha’s father had also known each other since high school.

Kwame now knew that love was something beyond his control indeed. It apparently could switch.

From his worldview, it looked like love had levels. Some were deeper and doper than others, just like the one between Ana and himself. What he felt for Ana was like never before. It was inmost and hard to understand. It also had a cruel edge to its tyranny. Ana or nothing else was what the urge craved for.

‘Don’t cry love.’ Kwame was looking at tears in the eyes of the woman he loved dearly. Ana gestured with her index finger so that he did not utter another annoying word, but Kwame did not heed to her. ‘I had to end the relationship in the States, that’s the reason why I was absent for
more than two weeks. The reason why you could not reach me was because of how much I love you. I love you so much that I can’t lie to you Ana,’

As of this time Ana appeared like a statue, unmovable.

‘If you had called and enquired why I was not around, I would have lied, and I did not want to lie to you. I also did not want to tell you I had someone else.’

Kwame slammed into the sofa and supported his head with his two hands at his forehead. Before he could tell her that he was afraid to lose her, Ana had begun talking.

‘So you wanted her to rather break the news to me... didn’t you?’ Ana was sorely hurt. Kwame shook his head. ‘Do you know you made me cheat with you?’ Ana asked, mad at herself. Kwame looked up at her, his lips shook but was unable to bring forth any word.

Nothing had happened between them yet but so long as they felt something for each other in the absence of Tasha, in Ana’s world, it overqualified to be cheating.

‘Are you this wicked?’ Ana could not fathom why he had to keep her in the dark. Her question literally stopped Kwame’s heart from beating again. Hearing such words being cast at him by the woman he loved was almost assassinating.

*How could you do this to two women, that’s so heartless of you.* She was not speaking but her countenance said it all. The enmity that Ana exuded surpassed hatred. Her conjecture had been supported by yet another evidence; Men are heartless, insensitive, cheats, and all the words that fit her posits.

He shook his head before he spoke. ‘Don’t say that love. I...’

‘I AM NOT YOUR LOVE! I DON’T LOVE YOU!’ Ana shouted and stamped her leg on the floor. Her lips shook from the first to the last word. She fought hard to say what she just said.

Kwame, for a second, did not want to believe he heard what Ana just said. The worst part was that he heard truth in her voice.

*No, my ears must be deceiving me,*

‘No.’ A tear began trickling down his cheek. It made him so damn winsome, however, Ana was not seeing any of this charm. All she saw when she now looked at him was someone worth unforgiving. Ana watched him kneel down and bring his palms together as if to pray. ‘No, don’t say that please,’ he pleaded. Ana forced herself not to blink, she did not want to cry in front of the man who had broken her heart. She considered crying in front of him a sign of weakness. She never considered herself weak.
‘Am sorry Kwame, we can’t happen. Am sorry.’ Ana slammed the door before Kwame could plead anymore. He grovelled to the floor in sheer disaster. He spent over a quarter of an hour on the floor to fully register the reality of his situation.

Ana had told him she does not love him.

He sat in the sofa in hopelessness. It seemed he had lost both Tasha and Ana. His hands went through his hair each time Ana came to mind. Ana was the reason why he had broken up with Tasha, and now she was telling him that she does not love him. The world was not a nice place for him at the moment. He wanted to hate love.

When Ana entered her living room, she threw herself headlong on the sofa. She pressed her eyes close to suppress the pain she was going through. She just realized that she had played a major role in ending another woman’s relationship. Such a small place this world was. Memories of her first heart break avalanched into her memory in flashes.

Why me?

Just two men in her life, all nothing to write home about.

Ana was a strong woman but never took a second bad luck lightly. Something was definitely wrong with her, she agreed. If this was the destiny she was born to face, then God had not been fair on her path at all. At least, she never had the intention of wrecking what someone had taken decades to build. She was simply caught up in the web of love like any other person out there.

Kwame shrugged everything that had happened off his shoulder. He was a man. A man needed to be strong. He was going to fight. He made a mental note to put in his all in this battle. He was going to fight for love. He would go to any length to win Ana’s heart. She was all he wanted and would stop at nothing. In the face of ‘no’, he was poised to find a yes somewhere. He wanted Ana.

Ana forced herself out of her sorrow to the shower. Bathing, she spent an awful lot of time thinking through her decision. She wanted nothing to do with Kwame, but currently he was all he could think of. Since the day she chanced on him under the shower, bathing had become a difficult task for her. She always bathed fast to escape some powerful urges that came with her eidetic memory. Memories of his naked body was a bad influence in lonely times.

Towelling off, she was lost in thought. She failed to notice when her phone pinged to a notification. Her mind was all Kwame, Kwame, Kwame.

In the next house, it was all Ana, Ana, Ana. She checked her phone and it was Kwame.
‘Ana please, don’t do this to me, I beg of you.’

She shook her head and threw the phone on her bed. Kwame did not know who he was dealing with. For some days now Ana thought she was growing love wings, but apparently the person she wanted to fly for had clipped the young wings. Ana slept late on Fridays, but today was different, she had to sleep away certain memories. She needed to be free. She knew the freedom she sought was more than political independence. It was one that needed full commitment. Kwame was not going to be a one day’s job. Just the mere fact that someone like him existed was going to take weeks to clear out of memory. She calculated how many weeks his voice would take to delete from her memory. She was sad at the result.

It was now that Ana knew how deeply she was in love with Kwame. What she felt for him was hovering around forever, and forever always took close to forever to succumb. The next day began a real test for her, and with her determination, her success was either uncertain or imminent. There was no room for total failure.

In the next house, Kwame had also weighed the pros and cons of the situation, and with his determination, he was also confident of success. The next day began a journey for him as well.

Chapter 22

Ana woke up three hours after car engines and chirrups from birds had begun the day. When her eyes flicked open, she checked her phone and it was almost nine in the morning. Hunger had woken her up. If not for that she would have probably slept the day away. In reluctance, she came down to the kitchen to make herself breakfast. A score of yawns suggested that she was going back to bed anytime soon. The day was a lazy one and she felt like doing nothing.

Ana loved sandwiches on Saturday mornings.

A slice of sausage, mixed salad, and lettuce was all she needed. Because of this, she always made sure she had everything before any Saturday.

When she had almost finished eating, it came to mind that it had been a while she visited her flowers in her compound. She had always considered them her second children. She offered them the same care she offered Joe. She decided to attend to them.
She opened her door and spooked.

‘Gosh!’

Kwame towered in front of her door like a guard.

‘Sorry love,’ he apologized for the early startle.

Ana grimaced.

‘Gentleman, how may I help you?’ She rose a set of questioning brows and stood akimbo. There was no space on her face for a smile. A whit of salad teased at the extreme corner of her lip, making her look irresistibly kissable. Kwame was lost in this silly thought for a second.

‘Ana please,’ his voice sounded like a Christmas carol on the eve of 24th December. Begging, though Ana was looking at him with a cold face, all she could hear was ‘Oh Christmas tree, great Christmas tree...’ When his lips stopped moving, Ana came back to her senses. He had apologized, but she did not hear a thing. She caught her Security passing by, she snapped and beckoned.

‘Throw him out!’ she instructed.

‘Sorry, Madam?’ The Security thought he heard something else. Kwame had been a regular figure in the compound, just that he was not on first names terms with him.

‘You heard me.’

Ana went back inside the house and shut the door behind her.

As she moved away from the door, all she could was ‘Sir please, sir please, don’t make me lose my job, I can lose my job, let’s talk outside please...’ This continued until her compound was silent. She heard the gate open and close. Like a peacock, she swaggered to her kitchen.

Next time you would not lie to women.

She went ahead and finished her sandwich.

Kwame’s day was a mayhem. She picked up none of his calls. He disliked text messages in moments like this. Text messages could be read, at least. If she would not pick up her calls, he would send his voice to her in a text.

Ana, you are getting it all wrong. It should not come to this. You certainly have no idea how much I love you and I understand. I approached this situation badly, I accept, but that does not define me. Ana, you are all I want and need. Currently, am not whole, you have my other half
Ana blinked a few times after reading his text, but she was still adamant of her decision; she needed to clear Kwame out of her life. She believed true love never hurts. Kwame apparently had defiled this. She needed the best way out to delete him from her life.

Perturbed, Kwame sat legs sprawled out. He simply did not know what to do. Minutes on, he had a gut feeling that someone was at his door.

Unlike many people, he had learnt not to trust his gut. The last time he did, an unscrupulous proof-reader stole a manuscript he had spent two years on. All efforts to retrieve that mind blowing plot had proven utterly futile. This time round, something was persisting he checked his door.

It was deeply disheartening when he saw the copy of the manuscript he gave Ana to read at the feet of his door. Ana had been there. He slapped his forehead and cussed.

He should have trusted his instincts.

He took the folded manuscript and scanned his compound. Only the radio set of his Security was in sight at the gate. Then he heard Ana’s gate close. He figured she just entered her compound. In a split second, he thought and dashed to the wall he shared with her.

‘ANA AM SO SORRY. I LOVE YOU SO MUCH AND I WILL NEVER BREAK YOUR HEART.’

Ana heard him scream. She hurried her steps before his words came coaxing again.

He heard her shut her door. Kwame vented a frustrating sigh. A sharp fluctuation in his chagrin made him strike the wall. He coiled and yelled in pain, bringing out his Security to enquire if his Madam was fine. He waved him off with pain etched on his face. Fanning his hands, he drooped until he entered his living room.

Chapter 23

At long last, Monday came. Ana could go to work and leave the whole residential area for
Kwame. Work was her best remedy. She needed a sky-scraping backlog today, just to fill the space Kwame had occupied in her mind. She knew temptations were most avoided when one was busy working.

She opened her door only to find Kwame on her porch. Kwame bounced off the couch when he heard the door open. Ana stood there dumbstruck.

*Did he sleep here on my couch?*

The look on Kwame’s face said something like that. His face was crumpled just like one who had just woken up from sleep. Kwame did not sleep there, but the idea came when he came out earlier that morning and realized that he could climb the wall they shared, since the Security would not let him in. Also, that part of the wall was not wired so considering his height it was a good entry point.

‘I did not sleep here,’ he spoke as if he had read her mind. Ana closed her lips and swallowed.

‘Kwame what do you want?’

‘I want you to stop treating me like the devil.’ His frustration dotted every word he spoke.

Ana could literally touch his soul. Kwame was dying. He needed a saviour. She lifted her gaze and settled on his gleaming eyes. He had tears in his eyes. If not for the fact that he was a cheat, she would have been making love to his eyes by now. He looked so hunky that Ana feared she would not be able to say no if he commanded her to bootlick.

She was morally insecure in his presence.

When she came back from these train of confused thoughts, Kwame had stretched out and his hand held her by the waist. Cognizant, she returned her gaze back to his face. He had closed the gap between them to an arms length. She became giddy and possessed. Nothing could exorcise the libido in her but him.

His gaze appeared to be boring love holes into her brains. She casted a leer away from him to reduce the influx of aphrodisiac in her head. The dope was becoming too much for an early Monday morning. She heard his lips move.

‘Ana.’ The air that left his lips to her face kissed her lips. She pursed hers. Her lips tasted like honey when she tasted them with her own tongue. She wanted to look him in the face and retort a ‘what?’ But she knew herself well. She knew if she dared looked him in those charming eyes and attempted to talk, with his kind yet commanding voice, she would say nothing less than ‘Yes Lord, thy servant listeneth.’
Fortunately for her, her leer landed on remedy, and she did not wait.

Her Security took to his heels when he heard his name. His Madam was calling from the porch. As he run, he checked his wrist.

*Madam is leaving early today.*

‘You allowed him entry again?’ Ana pointed at Kwame. Her countenance was like *what’s wrong with you?*

He was shaking his head to deny the accusation before he reached his Madam’s side. The Security stepped in between them. Ana turned and locked her door. She began pleading with Kwame to leave, but Kwame’s gaze was fixed on her.

The Security’s salary was increased a few months ago, something that rarely happened since he began working for Ana. Apparently Kwame was trying to make his ends meat slim again. He was not going to let Kwame that chance.

She tottered past them and went for her car. She honked loudly, which startled the Security to dash to the gate.

Kwame was still in the compound, he had not left yet. A sharp reverse and a screech saw her Lamborghini exit.

‘Sir, please, I have a family to feed...’ She heard the Security plead as she sped away.

**Chapter 24**

When she reached her office, she had no choice but to admit that she was in love with Kwame. If not, why on earth would a woman as strong as herself feel so defenceless each time he was around? She dropped her bag on her table and put her head down on her wrist. She shut her eyes. She did not want to accept the fact that she was in love with a cheat. She wondered if it was bad luck that was making her fall for cheats, or maybe cheats knew how to handle pretty women more than the other guys, thereby her inability to resist falling for them.
She checked her table and there was quite a workload to work on that day. She was glad. Ana still mused on her best way out. Nothing had come to mind yet so she began work. Meanwhile, the downcast Kwame also paced back and forth his living room to find the best way to win Ana back. Nothing had come to mind at his end either. In the course of the day, as Ana worked, something came to mind but she thought it was too sudden to undertake so she brushed the idea off. Kwame had also found the perfect move, which he planned to execute that eve. He had begun planning towards it already. It dawned on him that he had not kissed her yet. Kwame wanted to know her reactions if he kissed her. Whether she was going to pull back, slap him in the face or kiss him back dearly, he wanted to know.

Her reaction was key.

Upon second thought, Ana realized her idea was the best. She needed it. In addition, it sounded like a taste of his own medicine. She stopped what she was doing and meditated on the idea.

That eve, Kwame waited for a long-time in front of Ana’s gate but it appeared she was not coming anytime soon. After over five hours of unproductive stick around, he retired to his house. If she comes home late that day, and due to that he could not accomplish what he planned on doing, the next day was bound to surely come to his aid.

Ana came home very late that night. She had made her decision and there was no stopping her. Kwame heard her car vroom into her compound when he was about sleeping. Because he had also waited for a long-time, he did not sleep early that day. This consequently ate into his morning.

Kwame woke up quite late than the normal time he usually wakes up. Ana was first thing on his mind. She might have left for work by now, but evening was sure to come. He encouraged himself.

That day run so fast and he loved it. He organized unnecessary work to carry out just to run down the hours of the day. When evening came, joy came to his heart. He was in high spirits, almost to the point of jumpiness. After a couple of hours, he checked the time. It was the same time she came home the previous night.

*Ana come on! Where are you?*

He was controlling his impatience. Time moved the slowest Kwame had ever known. Minutes were like decades, whiles hours were like millennia. That day, Kwame waited until he began head nodding. It appeared she was not coming back that day. Head down and doleful, he retired to bed. However, her absence would not discourage him. It was a morale booster to fight on. Joy always came in the morning, and once morning comes, evening was inevitable.
He woke up early to check if she returned. After checking, he noticed that one of her cars was missing from the fleet. Alarmed, he confronted her Security. Upon querying, he was told that she did not come home the previous night. He wondered what had kept her from home, nothing popped up.

_I miss the sound of your car and the fact that someone like you exist right next to me. I miss you so much dear, please come back._ Ana read his message hundreds of miles away from home but did not reply. She shook her head twice, one for the fact that she still doubted if her plan would work, and two for the fact that Kwame appeared not to know quit. He was stronger by the day. Everyday he fashioned a new idea to reduce the hostility between Ana and himself, but so far, she had overcome all his tactics.

That day too passed. Kwame did not see Ana. She would not pick up his calls or return his text. She was not a child, he knew Ana was not missing. What she chose to do with her life was solely her own business.

Kwame was going nuts. His crave for Ana was more than cocaine. He wanted to smoke love with her.

Five working days passed and Ana was nowhere to be found. Kwame went to her work place to make some enquiries on her whereabouts, but that place too could barely give any significant news on Ana. Her immediate assistant said she calls everyday, but does not know where she is. He was left with one last resort, which he decided to pursue the following Monday.

He arrived at Joe’s school right before break time. Joe also knew nothing about his mother’s location. Initially he reasoned Joe was hiding something, but persistence revealed that the kid was speaking the truth.

‘But has she called you?’

‘Yeah, yesterday.’

Kwame reclined in the leisure bench and looked up in the sky. He conceded Ana would pass for a rare mineral if she was one in human form, difficult to find. She had left no traces. Home, he still told himself that Ana was worth waiting for, little did he know that his body was now about switching into the real craving mood. The worst was that he did not have her picture to look at. Ana was not the social media type so he would not see her picture anywhere except her house. Day in day out, Ana’s absence made her more powerful.

She grew from a thought, to a train, to a desire, then eventually to an obsession.

The air conditioner would be on but Kwame would sweat throughout his sleep. He would eat
and be hungry the next hour. Writing had become impossible and boring. It was in Ana’s absence that he wrote his most boring chapter ever, he decided not to write again until Ana was back in his arms. Coincidentally, his team, Manchester United, began drawing a lot of matches. His life had become a rat’s nest. Nothing was in order.

After almost a month, he slid. He took just a tot of whisky. It did not continue the next day, but the day after. He knew multiple tots were in the offing. Then two tots went down in a day. Then it went to five, and ten, and then eventually, he settled into full relapse.

He had begun drinking again.

Alcoholic beverages had become his father, son, and spirit. He worshipped them day and night. When he was sober, there was hangover from another hangover. Alcohol had made him a prisoner to his house. He did not move out for days. Fortunately, and unfortunately, he run out of alcohol, which forced him to pause. He came to his senses for a couple of days and then became aware that he had not had his bath for days. Bottles were everywhere, his face had grown haphazardly, his breath had gone bad. He had not seen a toothbrush in days. His phone’s battery had been dead for nearly twenty-four hours, which had made his family members in the States worried.

One of his Uncle’s touched down in Ghana the following day. He came to meet the mess half cleared. He helped Kwame bring the house back to shape and tried talking him out of his obsession. His effort went down to a zero. The more he mentioned Ana’s name, the more Kwame wanted to go out there and search for her.

‘Uncle, please,’ he stopped him politely, after his advice drifted towards unending. ‘Everything will be fine.’ Kwame rather assured his Uncle.

Chapter 25

It had been two months now, Ana decided to return. From the look of things, she was not going to succeed. Stopping the wedding bells had been a waste of time. She was deeply in love to the extent that she was afraid, so she had to test Kwame’s commitment in her absence. It was what ensued while she was away that she was interested in. Someone who was truly in love with another person would manifest some signs of emptiness and lack. These and many others were
signs Ana was looking out for when she returns. It was also to retaliate and punish Kwame though, for his breaking of Tasha’s heart. Ana felt for her and thought he did not deserve a smooth entry into her life.

He had to suffer to it.

On Ana’s path too, she had put in her best to endure for these two months. Kwame would not leave her mind for a second. She thought her exile would come with some clearance in her mind, rather, it was a metal torture.

She arrived at her house exactly six in the evening. Immediately she stepped out of her car, her Security could not wait but submit his assignment. She had been gone for exactly sixty-two days, Kwame had come in search of her about one hundred and seventy times. He came to ask the Security if she was back twice every day. Kwame actually left just a while ago before she returned. Ana asked for more details but the man could go no further.

She quickly unpacked and could not wait.

As she had almost reached Kwame’s gate, it opened, she watched a car slowly thrust out. The car came to stop when the driver saw her. Something told the driver to ask her if she was the Ana he had heard of, he did. Ana responded that she was the one.

‘So you are the one who has made my nephew a drunkard?’ Kwame’s Uncle asked. He was going back to the States. Ana felt bad and sad for Kwame. She did not know what to say as the old man watched on. Then eventually, he drove away.

Immediately Ana stepped foot on the compound, something moved in Kwame’s body. His soul came alive all of a sudden. He did not know the source of the joy in his body but he knew he felt invigorated. Something had gone right or was bound to happen, he could feel it but could not point out exactly what was going on.

It had been almost three days since he last took alcohol. He stared at the red label in his hands for a while before lifting the cock. He sat on the floor, in front of his bed.

Ana went to his living room, scanned everywhere but he was nowhere to be found. He cried out his name but there was no response. Hands on her chest, she went to his door.

Kwame thought he heard a voice. He knew he was the only one in the house so maybe his mind was playing games on him.

The rim of the bottle had nearly touched his mouth when his door flung open. He had not drunk yet but he knew it was alcohol playing a trance.
Ana halted in his tracks and stood there. Her heart missed two vital beats, one for herself and one for Kwame. She joined her hands in front of her.

Kwame turned and looked at her.

This mental image was sharp. It was the best his mind had engendered in her absence. His mind was surely getting better and better.

‘Kwame,’ the epiphany spoke and moved lightly.

Just like many other times, Kwame knew it would vanish before he blinked again. Every time Ana appeared, he savoured her looks for as long as he could just to satisfy his mind’s crave.

Ana continued to look on. Tears had gathered at the back of her eyes. She was the cause of Kwame’s current state. Though she thought he deserved it, she was deeply sorry. She did not know it would come to this. Kwame’s stare made him look like a mad man who had no chance of recovering. The way he still sat there after she had entered for close to a minute without rising to his feet said that he was not in the right state of mind. Kwame sat with retched penitence. The consequences of his heartfelt decisions had chained him in this quagmire. Ana wanted to grovel to the ground in sadness.

Wow! This day dream has been playing for a long-time. Kwame thought. He had had enough. He wanted to drink. So he did what he always did so that Ana vanished, to move towards her. When he stood up, Ana had the goosebumps as if they were showered on her.

Kwame looked in her direction and she still stood there, she had not vanished yet.

‘Maybe this time she would let him touch her before she disappears,’ he spoke hopefully under his breath.

A lazy step towards Ana, and she felt so light that she thought she was floating in the air. Another step towards her and Kwame began believing the reality. He had tried touching her in some of the trances in Ana’s absence but it did not work, so this time, just to be sure she was real, he bypassed her and went for the door. He locked it and put the key in his pocket. He turned and Ana was still there. Sweat broke on his brows and nose.

‘Ana?’
Chapter 26

Ana turned towards him with a sorry face. With his mouth still open, he came and held her at the shoulders, as if doing some reality test. Ana was real. It fully registered that it was not a trance or a dream.

‘Love of my life, where have you been?’ his mouth shook mercilessly at the shock. Kwame gave himself up for joy, which made him go down on his knees. He seized Ana in his arms and rested his cheek on her belly. Facts of her existence made him shut his eyes and relish in her return.

Ana was guilt-ridden and remorseful. Kwame had brought all her sentiments afore with his dramatics. He had left her handicapped in all definitions. She watched him with intense care, not knowing what to do or what to say. Her breaths were that of compassion and tenderness. Her affection was at its peak. All that her reflexes left her was a soft repeated pat on his shoulders on which her hands rested.

‘Ana please, am deeply sorry, but don’t leave again.’ His voice was faint and painful. Ana heard series of agony in his plea, which summoned all the comfort in her to an emergency gathering in her beating heart. This spewed pure love through her tiny veins. Seconds on, she was full. Every muscle in her had retired to lax. ‘If you do so something bad might happen to me, maybe I might die, Ana.’ He was now looking up at her with welled eyes.

Whether he smiled or cried, they amounted to the same effect on her, spellbound. If his eyes were a mirror, she would look at her beautiful reflection for a lifetime.

Ana could only nod. Seeing Kwame in the depths of such an intolerable despair had stolen every word in her mouth, she was left to gestures. She willed him to stand, but he appeared dead-tired and weary to execute the simple act on his own. Ana helped him up with her new found strength.

‘Baby, I’m here for you ok, I’ll go nowhere again.’ His rising up seemed to have rolled out Ana’s voice from her lungs to her lips. He had infested her in everything, her voice was also faint and aching. Hearts and flowers were her body’s available disposition so she was out of options. ‘Come here.’ she brought his head to rest on her chest, so that her head was slightly shifted to the side. Her cheek was in contact with his as they stood in each other’s warmth and grace. A minute later, she heard his lips part. She opened her shimmering eyes. Kwame moved and settled his forehead on hers. Spasms threw her lips into a dungeon of helplessness. She felt his large arms take command of her cute waist.
All her intimate things had begun swaying off track.

Every atom in her had paired with other atoms, which turned on the hot pipe in her body. It began with little drops. A mighty ocean was imminent in minutes, considering the rate at which a drop of love followed the other.

‘Ana Mills.’

She opened her eyes, gathered a few scattered nerves, and looked up at him. This brought their sweating noses to slip off each other’s.

The attraction was a moth to a flame kind.

Kwame was a headless chicken bound for love treatment. Their lips had exhausted the little air that stood between them.

‘Fitz Brooks,’ she also mentioned his name in full.

Kwame was a name given him by Ana and her son, Joe. This was because he was born on Saturday and wanted to feel Ghanaian.

‘You might have heard this over and over again, but I love you so much.’ Ana’s eyes bounced off from one eye ball to the other as if true love found it difficult settling in one.

Minds began having smooth control over matter.

The sweet silence was immortal and sublime. Actions always speak louder than words, hers spoke volumes of pillow talks. Under some unknown influence, Ana battled speech. She knew Kwame was watching her in the battle. It was not because she could not reply that she loved him too, but because she had multiple replies that were all forcing to come out at once. Her system was crashing. The feeling they both shared was burning like a cigarette that could not be stamped out. They were about crossing a rubicon and it was as plain as a pikestaff.

Still fighting to say something, he saw Kwame’s head close the little gap. She quickly closed her eyes and screamed sugar cubes in her mind. She had thrown caution to the wind, let the consequences come, she was ready.

Kwame teleported her into utopia.

Chapter 27

A week later at the Kotoka International Airport.

The evening was cold. It held ambiguous prospects, the chill in the air also spoke neither of a
second heartbreak nor true love.

What if Tasha pulled off a trick and he fell for it? Is Kwame that committed? Does he have the mental strength? Well, these questions would be verified if he returns the same. These questions and similar flooded Ana’s mind, but she kept her cool.

Unmoved by pries, they had been in each other’s arms for the past ten or so minutes, relishing in a contact they had both come to love. They stood a few metres away from the international departure at the Kotoka International Airport. They fitted like hand and glove.

The passenger service agent had begun waving the passengers to start moving in the terminal. They pulled out of the hug in slow reluctance. The seemingly unending hug that appeared to have kindled Kwame to randy and Ana to horny had been broken at last. They sighed simultaneously before her gaze touched his.

‘Come back into my arms when all is settled, please,’ her gaze spoke with her arms clasped in front of her. Kwame still held onto his uninterpretable smile. The urge to take his lips for the last time before he caught his flight was so overpowering as her uncontrollable body jerked in and out of the space that stood between them. Seconds later, when he needed to be on his way, he leaned in and touched her cheek with his lips. It was a short one. Ana closed her eyes to take in the pompous tickle that wafted from the source of contact to other parts of her. The clasp in front of her tightened harder. Then he pulled out.

‘I will miss you, and don’t worry too much.’ If not for the fact that he held a luggage each in his hands, he would have held her cheeks to cheer her up. ‘I will be back. I will make Joe smile at us,’ Kwame said. It sounded like a promise. Ana’s tongue appeared to have failed her as she could not bring forth any word. Her nod appeared robotic.

Kwame began taking steps towards the terminal. Ana watched him leave. Those hairy pair of bolders that rocked with each step, she watched and admired, which brought some joy to her lips.

A last wave came in after he checked in, she waved back, then he entered into the side of the corridor.

He was gone.

Why do I always have unsteady relationships? she was tempted to say this out loud in her mild frustration. Her late husband came to mind. She turned and gaited dejectedly towards her Land Cruiser, head stooped low. As she left, she was uncertain what would happen next.
Epilogue.

A week ago, after Ana had returned, Kwame teleported her into utopia with a whopping kiss.

It was when she tasted him that she realized that she had been starving for years. He was like an addict who had just whiffed in his favourite combination. In dribs and drabs came the desire to open pages with him. Her pages were adorned with an embarrassment of riches. Before they knew where they were, the night had begun for them. The haste with which she wanted to satisfy herself was utterly embarrassing, but that was the slowest she could go. Two bodies had discovered treasures that had been hidden in plain sight. Kwame was a perfect brother to the night, her brown skin boy. She agreed that shadows do not lie when her fingertips passed over his sweating abs.

Months ago, when she chanced on his naked silhouette one night, she thought his shadow was playing tricks on her vision. Now, she sided with those who said cloths do not make a man. It was a virile encounter.

They spoke languages only they could understand; moans and cries.

Corny polyglots.

This vigil episode completely transformed Kwame and Ana into wild beings, trapped in hypnosis.

Kwame was a writer, therefore he knew the age-long feud between brown pages and fire. He made sure his touches did not leave trails of sparks on her, because her love life was dry as some old, brown paged, leather-coated historical book. Though Ana was not a book, he licked his fingers and flipped through her pages until her spine creased and lay spent.

Other moments too he cupped her in his arms and read her passionately on his bed of roses. A book held a house of gold indeed. The four-poster that had been sitting idly in Kwame’s room found its voice at last. Squeaks and creaks, which composed lovely tunes of flex. As a business woman, she taught him how to make late night profit, break even in the dark, and countless ways to avoid anticlimactic losses throughout the smutty, pata-pata dawn.

Months later, with Ana’s help, Kwame published his first novel. Afterwards, he had to go see Tasha again so that she accepts his apology…

The End.
N. O. Bekoe: Thanks so much for spending time with me, I am looking forward to your comments and reviews on Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, and Linkedin at Author N. O. Bekoe.