

Acclaim for *The Testator*

This is a riveting tale of betrayal, deceit, seduction, lust, legal drama, revenge, power and money. I felt like I knew all the characters personally and knew all the places where the events took place. I couldn't put down the book once I started reading it. Kanayo O. Kanayo and Tony Ekwoaba have written a brilliant thriller that I hope will be turned into a film soon.

— *Dr Joe Abah*

The central theme of this work of fiction is on the niggling social issue of will - whether testate or intestate. What is really constructive in this genre of legal fiction, however, is the creative form in which it is narrated. In what is truly a masterpiece, the authors have weaved an enthralling story around a solemn topic that is as educative as it is entertaining— that too in a most intriguing, captivating and gripping manner. The style and diction are simple enough to elucidate the workings of Nigeria's justice system and, by extension, some aspects of the daily life of the ordinary man on the streets of Nigeria. This work is a collector's item that ought to feature on every family shelf.

— *John C. Azu, Judicial Editor for Daily Trust Newspaper and media ambassador of the African Court on Human and Peoples Rights*

The Testator grips you on page one and doesn't let go until the breathless ending. Together, Kanayo and Ekwoaba have created

a three-dimensional world filled with innocence and greed, life and murder.

— *Mary Harris, US Author and editor*

This is a wonderful work of art that is just as entertaining as it is didactic...There is an ample deployment of legal registers for students studying or taking courses in English language and easily passes for an introductory course in a law degree programme...

— *His Worship, Samuel Ebiyekhimi Idhlarhi,
Chief Magistrate, FCT, Abuja.*

The authors have demonstrated that they possess the requisite expertise and gravitas to churn out this historic masterpiece of literary work. Exquisite, superb, and piercingly engaging, you won't dare put the book down until the last page. *The Testator* is a thrilling socio-legal piece that dares your imagination and creativity.

— *Chief Mike Ozekhome, SAN, OFR, Ph.D.*

With lush, breathtaking prose, this fast-moving legal thriller delivers an intriguing portrayal of crime, family, culture, economic anxiety, and the ways in which people navigate a broken system. An incisive political commentary with unforgettable characters and an enthralling series of events, *The Testator* makes for both an exciting and intellectual read.

— *Jake Okechukwu Effoduh, Partner, Praxis & Gnosis Law,
Nigeria; Vanier Scholar, Osgoode Hall Law School, Canada.*

This fictional thriller, *The Testator* depicts the ups and downs of legal practice. It reveals the intersections of law, life, criminality and the triumph of justice with the aid of technology. It is a masterpiece on the beauty of art and law. Kudos to the inventive genius of the authors.

— *Prof. Yemi Akinseye-George, SAN*

“In the *TESTATOR*, the authors take the readers through a surreal and magical adventure in the tragicomedy of power, law and human suffering. This tale has a dramatic effect; it runs like a real theater of the absurd and malevolence interspersed with exhilarating dark humors. The plots are a tightly woven tale that reads like something from Albert Camus’s *The Trial*. Its twists and turns are cinematic. As I read, I could imagine myself with a cup of popcorn trapped in the sight and sound of a big cinema screen. *The Testator* marries uncanny insights about the pathology of the criminal justice system with a cynical appreciation of the human condition. Intrigues, greed and fear are woven together in a tapestry of maladministration of justice. Shakespeare would find so much to laugh about in the book. He thought all lawyers should be killed. After reading this book, he may now say: “First, let’s kill the human”. Kanayo and Ekwoaba’s book deserve another and another read. It is worth the time.”

— *Dr Sam Amadi, Associate Professor and Director of Abuja School of Social and Political Thought*

In this interesting work of fiction that marries law with romance, betrayal, comedy and terror, ace actor, Kanayo O. Kanayo, and Tony Ekwoaba, deploy a theme that is fresh and resonant yet hardly ever discussed in a society where many prefer to live in

denial about the certainty of death. Beautifully written and enjoyable from the first page to the last, ‘The Testator’ is one of those imaginative and gripping tales so authentic that readers begin to ask: Is it based on real life experience?

—*Olusegun Adeniyi, Chairman, THISDAY Editorial Board*

“The Testator is a masterpiece! The authors’ imagination and prowess in writing captures the mind from start to finish.”

—*Saifullah I. U. Bello Esq.*

“In The Testator, Kanayo O Kanayo and Tony Ekwoaba have masterfully delivered a gripping legal thriller full of twists, turns, suspense, drama and compelling characters. From the first chapter, you enter a world of despondency and reincarnation. By the time you are done, you are filled with rage and relief.”

—*Simon Kolawole, journalist and founder of
The Cable online newspaper*

THE TESTATOR

A LEGAL THRILLER

KANAYO O. KANAYO

TONY EKWOABA

THE TESTATOR

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

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Dedication

The book is dedicated to every lover of justice. We pray for a better justice delivery system in our beloved country Nigeria.

FOREWORD

The certainty of death strongly suggests that man should by all means possible prepare for what is to happen to his Estate upon his demise. The said suggestion was well taken by the billionaire and business mogul, Chief Peter Onu as captured in the riveting prose which is befittingly titled 'The Testator'.

Upon reading the manuscript of 'The Testator' which was presented to me by the authors: His Worship, Tony Ekwoaba and the Veteran actor and Lawyer, Kanayo O. Kanayo. Esq., MFR., I must say that I find the work to be a masterpiece and its theme moved me to graciously accept to write this foreword.

Although 'The Testator' is a fictional literary work, same mirrors the real life quagmires and theatrics enveloping the issue of inheriting the deceased member of a family. The work also exhibits the advantages of writing a Will. One of such advantage being to prevent one's kindred from engaging in lifelong family feud over one's Estate long after one's demise.

In 'The Testator', Chief Peter Onu foresaw the war that would have ruined his empire and he proactively arrested same using his testamentary directives. Other advantages of a Will as exposed in the captivating prose includes giving the testator: the leverage of appointing Executors to distribute his assets; the ability to

appoint specific persons to manage his business; the freedom to make donation to charitable organizations of his choice; being assured of unbroken chain of administration of his Estate and the chance to give directions as to how he wishes to be buried.

Being a judicial officer, I must commend the effort of the authors in exposing several aspect of the legal system particularly the hint at the practice of the legal profession by young lawyers; the proceeding of the court system, the administration of criminal justice and the prison system. All of which encapsulates the apprehension of the citizens as manifested through the various characters in the instant narrative. I also commend the authors' effort at using a fictional tale to bring about an appraisal and a critique of the socio-economic and socio-cultural issues prevalent in Nigeria.

Above all, 'The Testator' will serve every reader with an effortless assortment of imaginative entertainment, legal education and socio-cultural lessons owing to the intrigues in the plots, the clarity of information supplied, the richness in proverbial quotes and the vivid description of the setting.

I heartily recommend 'The Testator' for every household and every individual from all works of life and I can confidently say that once you open the first page, you will find it difficult to resist flipping the next page till you get to the end.

HON. JUSTICE BENEDICT BAKWAPH KANYIP (FNIALS)
President, National Industrial Court of Nigeria

CHAPTER 1

Pius leaned on the big mahogany table that used to be the office front desk. He'd just been wondering how he would accomplish the day's tasks without a secretary. Rebecca Oholi, his secretary who was the last staff member on that desk, had just resigned yesterday. She simply sent a text message that she had gotten a job elsewhere. This was after five months of not being paid any salary, five months of her coming to work, hoping things would get better, but things never did.

At past 8 o'clock, her usual time of resumption, she was nowhere around the office. Pius was reluctant to call. You know that moment you wished to scold someone but you couldn't because you weren't meeting your part of the deal, so you just accepted whatever you got? It was like a child hurt in his disobedience holding back his tears. That was what was happening with Pius. She was conscientious. One amongst a dozen of them that had come in the hope that things would get better; but as they say, boiling a rotten egg for hours would never undo its rottenness.

On the peeling wall was a framed picture of Pius with Mr Olasupo Shasore, SAN, a former Attorney General of Lagos State. Pius wore an elaborate, expensive wig and gown. Strangely, it was the same wig and gown he's had to date, though it just

didn't feel the same anymore, as though the glamour evaporated with the fall. But how did he get so messed, so damned messed up. He has asked himself this question a billion times and more, and perhaps he would keep asking for the rest of his life.

His thoughts were interrupted by footsteps approaching the staircase. The two offices on the top floor were closed. They usually closed early before 6:00 pm. He looked in the direction of a wall clock, it read 3:00 pm. It was in a state of comatose, static. He recalled the last time Rebecca had requested money for stationeries and batteries for the clocks and he had told her he would give her the next day. He never did. He checked his Michael Kors wristwatch and it read 6:21 pm. Whoever it was wasn't going to the office above him. The person was coming to his law office.

Pius listened as the footsteps approached.

The only visitor he has had in recent times was Michael, the house agent. He had come innumerable times asking for the rent and had threatened to evict him. He'd spoken about the rent perhaps in every language he could speak, and was determined to get his pound of flesh, if it came to that. It wasn't just the rent. Pius hadn't been quite diligent with all the other payments, including electricity bill, security and waste disposal bills. Michael had seen for himself how bad it looked, even though he disbelieved it, as nobody would think a lawyer of Pius' status couldn't afford to pay even electricity bills which the tailors downstairs paid *ad libitum*. It sort of lent to the stereotype that lawyers would rather make trouble than pay rent. Whatever it was going on, Michael had said, he wouldn't keep up with Pius' excuses for long. He was fed up!

Each approaching footsteps doubled Pius' heartbeat. It didn't sound like Michael's. He'd just been around yesterday, when he threatened rather subtly that things would be different the next

time he came around. He didn't have to say it; Pius knew. He knew that Michael liked him no more than a dog liked a cat.

The footsteps drew closer, slowly and laboriously.

"Could it be a client?" Pius soliloquized, not sure what else to think. He hasn't had any in months, as far as he could recollect, except for the few cases that brought the few pennies here and there, most of whom were from a few old clients who didn't bother finding out where he was hiding; none of them cared to visit the rathole he called an office as if they knew it wasn't worth their visit.

Whoever it was kept climbing, and he listened. It seemed the person hummed as he or she came up the stairs, even though he barely heard anything due to the noise outside. Whoever it was surely was as heavy as the steps that came pounding on the stairs.

Then there was a rattle on his office door. Pius quickly stood upright and stepped away from the mahogany table. He made for the door. But before his hand could reach the handle, the door swung open.

The man standing in the doorway looked no less than the trunk of an iroko tree. He filled the entire doorway. He was as tall as he was broad, with little eyes that flashed from his ball-round face. A curly moustache rested beneath his flat, thick nose. He must have been in his fifties, and no less. He wore a black, expensive-looking coat.

"Barrister Pius?" His voice was hoarse and loud. As he spoke, he panted, and Pius noticed it was quite a task for him to climb the stairs.

Pius nodded.

"Barrister Pius Egbe?"

He nodded again.

The heavy figure moved farther into the room and stretched

out a thick arm for a handshake. His grip was firm, his palm wrapped around Pius'.

"You can call me Nick," he said. Pius caught a whiff of cigar in his breath.

He glanced at him, not sure what he could possibly do for such a figure.

"Won't you take me into your office?" Nick roared.

"Oh, yes! Yes!" Pius exclaimed, recovering from his absent-mindedness. He'd been so stunned at the figure before him that he forgot to take him into the office. He turned and led the way.

It was a small law office. Front desk, a small shelf nailed to the wall for a library, the Principal's office, and a workstation for two lawyers. The office was mostly partitioned with board and glass. The previous occupant did the partitioning before the law firm was set up. Pius only retained the earlier partitioning and repainted the place.

Nick looked through the spaces as they walked through the passageway, examining everything with rapt attention. He didn't utter a word until he got to a small cubicle with the tag, Principal's Office.

"How long have you been here?" he asked.

"Three years."

"Since the fall," Nick stated. It wasn't a question. It was a remark, one that dripped with sarcasm.

Both men walked into the Principal's Office. There, at the centre, was a big desk, with two chairs for visitors. Pius crossed over and sat down.

The visitors' chairs hadn't had anyone sit on them for aeons. Apart from the chairs, there was a bookshelf filled with a few law books, law reports, and dusty case files. The entire place reeked of musty papers.

"You may have a seat," Pius stated, noticing that Nick was still

standing. He was looking at the framed pictures on the peeled wall, old pictures of the Principal with top lawyers, politicians, and businessmen. Those were the days when Pius Egbe was a name that commanded respect. Those days he had dreamed someday he would reach the apogee of his career, that he would become a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, and he was close to some of the requirements: ten years post call to bar, eight judgements in the High Court, six Court of Appeal and three Supreme Court judgements, receipts of his practicing fees payment.

“Sit down, you said?” Nick asked, rather amused. Pius noticed his reluctance. The chair was very dusty and dirty. He grabbed a piece of cloth and dusted the chair and beckoned Nick to sit. Nick sat down and both men laughed.

“Mr Nick. How may I help you?” Pius asked in the most professional tone, trying as much as he could to be polite and welcoming. He wouldn't miss this single client who went through the stress of finding him in the rat hole he called an office. The gold Rolex watch on his fat wrist and big ring on his finger showed he wasn't a man of mean earnings. His coat really didn't look good, it was a horrible taste in fashion, but the wristwatch and ring were a statement. A statement to the fact that he was a rich man. A very rich man.

“How may you help me?” he asked. He seemed to have this habit of replying to things with questions. Pius didn't know why the big man did that, but he responded with a smile, still trying to sound polite.

Back in law school, students had dreams of changing the world once they became lawyers. They were taught how to welcome clients in some course called Client Counselling - Treat Clients as Kings: make them comfortable when they visit your law office, offer them drinks, coffee or tea, ask them, “Hope it

wasn't difficult finding my office?", and if they were feeling hot, and all that sort of questions.

With experience, Pius had learnt it didn't really matter. A client not poised to hire you wouldn't, no matter how you tried to please him.

Whatever brought this big man to his office must be serious. He seemingly needed help, but he was blissfully unaware that Pius needed him more.

A moment of silence followed, and then Nick began to tap his finger on the table. Then he started on what appeared like a tale.

"I've been following your story," he began. "You are quite a character they say, smart and tricky." He smiled and went on in his hoarse voice. "You have brains, they say, and you're reckless, but you have guts." He looked at Pius as though to verify this. Pius remained quiet and listened.

"Rumour has it that as a young man, you took risks and made a good fortune. But then as a man with a penchant for risk-taking, you also lost the fortune by taking more risks." He smiled sheepishly as he said this.

"You also got into trouble, some deep trouble, but as a tricky guy, you got yourself out of it, or at least some of it." His tiny eyes probed Pius, who'd noticed this and tried to not give himself away with his expression.

"When things became messy, you disappeared from your circle, you ran and hid yourself in this dungeon. You set this place up with the crumbs that fell from your hallowed table. Hired a few lawyers and stayed low key. You only took cases from magistrate courts and nobody in this environment knows who you were. Again, rumour had it that you burnt yourself in the car, some said they saw you die and all sorts of stories. But till this time, no one knows exactly which is true."

“What rumours?” Pius asked, believing he had to say something.

“You know, the tales in the circles. It all died down eventually, and people went about their business.”

Pius shook his head, still wondering where the big man was going with all this.

“And like in recent times, luck always ran out on you. Even this hasn’t worked,” he intoned, taking in the office with disgust evident on his face.

“You haven’t paid your staff, nor your rent. The landlord is threatening to throw you out any moment.”

“You have been following me?” Pius said, infuriated that the man knew so much about him.

“I said that from the beginning. Not that I had been following you, but we had to know enough to decide if you were the man we wanted for the job,” he said as though it was some achievement.

“You are afraid of how to and what would become of you when you quit. You have no child, no wife, and nothing really matters anymore. The glamorous girls that sucked on your life in those good days have all deserted you upon your fall.”

“Enough!” Pius shouted, in a weak attempt to ease the humiliation he felt. “What do you want from me?”

It was obvious the man had done his investigations. Though he was fat and ugly, he wasn’t stupid. He was sharp-witted and scheming, maybe more tricky than one would ever find out. Something about him hinted at trouble.

“I have a job for you.” He flashed the thick ring and gold Rolex watch at Pius.

“What kind of job?” Pius inquired. He was convinced it couldn’t be anything to do with the courts. Such a man didn’t

use lawyers, and if he did, not his kind of lawyers. He was the type who took care of his problems the street way.

“It’s a job you alone can do. The kind that would be believed if you did it.” He stroked his moustache and focused on Pius as he said this.

“Why me?”

“Because you are a perfect match for the job.” As he said this, he put his hand in one of the pockets of his coat and brought out a bundle of dollar bills. They were neatly piled together; you could easily notice there was more from where it came. He dropped the bundle on the table.

The rush of adrenaline that came with sight of those bills tripled Pius’ heartbeat. The frontal lobe of his brain was already thinking of the problems the money could solve. He couldn’t take his eyes off Benjamin Franklin on the hundred-dollar notes.

“This is a teaser for you!” he said, trying to lure him further. He’d seen the greed and how much Pius wished to grab the bills and turn them from one side of the table to the other.

“Barrister Pius, you can have this and much more if you agree to do this simple task. Chief Onu is dead, and all we are asking is for you to read his will!” he said calmly, and examined the reaction that came with that.

Pius sank into his seat, thrown off by the statement.

“Chief Onu? Chief Peter Onu? He definitely can’t be dead. Why would you pay so much for me to read his will? He’s not dead, and how can I be sure of what you are saying? I spoke with him two days ago,”

“Chief is dead, even though it’s not been made public yet. He died yesterday. Call his wife, Mrs Jennifer, if you doubt me. She’s aware of this meeting.”

Pius paused to turn this over in his mind for a while. The woman wasn’t a good person. She was nasty and cared more

about her skin and looks than anyone else. He was Chief's personal lawyer for years, until things took a bad turn for him and Chief Onu had told him to be wary of her. Chief Onu made every public show of affection towards her and acted as though his marriage to her was beautiful, but he had secretly complained that marrying her was a grave mistake. Poor man. He had all the wealth but never had true peace of mind.

"What is the money for?" Pius asked, knowing very well the woman wasn't that generous. She could only offer this if she had something up her sleeves, he thought.

"For your logistics, wardrobe, and other things," he said sternly. "There are a lot of eyes on the will and there will be some fighting to do. You need that for the job."

"I will put a call across to Madam," Pius stated.

"You do whatever you wish, but please note that you leave tomorrow afternoon for Abuja," Nick said as he made to leave.

"The money? You are leaving the money? I haven't told you if I'm taking the job or not."

"Do you have a choice? You are Chief's personal lawyer, you have to perform your final respect by helping to read and perfect his will."

"But he didn't tell me he had a will," Pius contested.

"He didn't?" Nick asked, expressing surprise, but then continued. "He didn't have to tell you. He may have mentioned it but it's the old man's right to make his will however he wished. Isn't it, Barrister?"

Pius didn't say anything as he stood to watch the man leave.

"The money is for your clothing; you look horrible. Change and get ready. Your flight ticket will be sent to you. Your flight is at twelve noon tomorrow."

CHAPTER 2

A black Toyota Corolla cruised around in search of a parking space. The street had lots of offices and was busy vehicular and human traffic. The road was narrow and one would have to be careful to avoid getting his car scraped by other drivers.

Tim Akpan was looking exasperated already. He'd had a frustrating day in court and didn't want any further stress.

"Why do these idiots just block the road, these Abuja taxis, all they look out for are passengers rather than other road users. Gush!" He voiced his frustration.

After about twenty minutes, he found a spot. It was as though someone had just driven out of the place, creating a space he could squeeze his Toyota Corolla into. He would spend just a few minutes, he thought, then run back to his office.

About the time he left the court, he'd received a call from a renowned detective friend of his who had often referred cases to him over the years. Detective Chris had said there was an important matter he would have him handle. The kind of case that would liberate him from years of work without commensurate pay.

"Tim, this is a lifetime opportunity you can't reject." He'd sounded rather urgent over the phone.

Tim stepped out of the car, taking his suit that he hung on the headrest. He wore the faded suit and opened the back door to grab his diary and a pen. He may need to jot down some things at the meeting. The rear seat of his car was jammed with books, case files, and law reports. This was the life of a hungry defence lawyer. Perhaps this case would give him the break he needed desperately.

He removed his bib and unfastened his stud, loosening his collar because he could barely breathe. He threw the bib on the rear seat and slammed the door.

The environment looked busy, though everyone minded their business. It didn't seem like anyone noticed him as he slid the key in its hole and turned its lock. Again, he looked over his shoulder to check that no one was looking. He was glad no one was looking. The car was old, a little old for a five-years-post-call lawyer like himself. He had to turn the key several times before it locked. He wished it had a remote lock, so he could step away and press a button like other car owners did. He'd been told by his mechanic that it was possible, but the amount he mentioned could as well pay for his brief writing training. He spent the money on the latter.

Detective Chris's office was on the fourth floor of Metro Plaza. Tim passed a few blocks before he got to the Plaza. The elevator wasn't working, and when he asked a uniformed security guard at the entrance, he was told there was a power outage. The elevator worked only with the central power. He took the stairs.

Detective Chris was expecting him when he got to his office.

"Let him in." Chris yelled at his staff once he saw Tim.

"Welcome, Tim. Please sit down." He motioned to Tim and went over to sit at the other end of the table. The office was well furnished with expensive leather chairs, some art decoration, and a pile of security books on a shelf. Framed images of Chris

with some important personalities and a closed circuit television screen hung on the wall.

Chris was a short, spare guy, in his middle forties. He was the type that didn't make any impression when you first met him, but would distil so much information from you before you knew it. If you weren't told the nature of his work, you wouldn't make the right guess. He looked frail and unassuming.

They had been friends for over two decades. They had run into each other one night as Chris had gone to study at the law facility.

"You've remodelled this place. It's so different from the last time I was here," Tim said as he looked around the beautiful office.

"Thank you. You haven't visited much," Chris stated.

"I've been busy with cases. It's been my busiest year, with nothing to show for it though."

"That's about to change!" Chris opened a drawer and brought out a folder.

"Tell me more."

"Does the name Chief Peter Onu ring a bell?" Chris asked, looking intently at Tim.

"Chris, who doesn't know Chief Onu? The billionaire oil mogul and owner of Onu Group of companies."

"He died this morning."

"How? I don't understand. Wasn't he on Channels TV last week talking about the acquisition of some massive land for a real estate project? Are you sure this information is right?"

"It's very accurate. I'm well informed by my source. The truth is that the family, or rather his wife, doesn't want anyone to know. But as we speak, Chief Onu is in the morgue."

"That's sad," Tim stated, surprised and amused at the same time.

“So how do I come in? I’m not the police or a detective like you, if it is about the cause of his death.”

“Do you know this boy? I suppose you represent him?” Chris asked as he handed over a picture he’d taken out from the folder to Tim.

“Yes. That’s Emeka Okoromadu, my client. He is a security guard at one of Chief’s engineering yards,” Tim said, not sure whether to say anything else. He didn’t know how much Chris knew and it wasn’t incumbent on him to state the nature of the offence the boy was charged with and if the boy was accused of murdering the old man. He was ready to cooperate with Chris, but he wasn’t going to reveal much that would go against client confidentiality. The hearts of lawyers are choked with secrets, secrets of clients they must not divulge no matter how weighty it seemed, and the rules of professional conduct of lawyers forbade them.

“Isn’t he the one you are representing in respect to an allegation of theft at the engineering yards?” Chris asked.

“Yes, but the young man is innocent. I have evidence to establish this.”

“Where is he now?”

“He was arraigned two days ago. We haven’t been able to perfect his bail, so he’s in prison. If you think the guy killed Chief, he’s got a strong alibi. The boy was in prison when Chief died.”

“Who is alleging that he killed Chief? Chief was, in fact, his father.” Chris said calmly and watched Tim react like someone who’d just seen a ghost.

“His father? What do you mean?”

“Three months ago, I got a call from a man who introduced himself as Chief Onu.” Chris raised his right hands to his mouth, then rubbed his palm on his face.

“At first I didn’t believe it was him,” he continued, “not that

I didn't sense it from his soft, calm voice, but I wasn't sure the billionaire would call me. I knew whatever made him call me was certainly serious. He pleaded anonymity and agreed to meet with me at a certain discreet location to talk. He said he had done his research and was told I knew my job, and he wasn't expecting anything less from me than excellent work."

Chris looked, glad to see Tim was listening.

"The meeting was arranged, discreetly though, and we met at one of the presidential suites at Hilton. He and I were alone. He asked the security detail with him to move out of sight and hearing.

Tim looked up and their eyes met.

"He told me he was being blackmailed. That a certain woman he had run into many years ago suddenly resurfaced and had been disturbing him, saying that she had a child for him. She said that she was going to expose him and run to the media if he didn't do something about the child. He said he didn't have an issue with taking care of the young man; in fact, he would be the happiest person on earth if indeed he did have such a son, but he needed to find out if truly the young man was his child. He asked the best way this could be confirmed. I told him to run a DNA test on the boy. He gave me the image of the boy and some other details about him."

"Did you find out?" Tim asked, wishing it was true.

"I did." Chris smiled. "And my investigation revealed that the boy worked as a security guard in one of Chief's engineering yards. I didn't know much about him, and how to go about this without raising red flags that could turn up to cause some damage to Chief. I also didn't want to raise the young man's hopes or expose him to facts that could make him start feeling entitled to Chief's property, so I got someone to get me his hair strand for a DNA. I actually paid two persons, his friend and his barber. I

didn't let them know what it was for, though. The results, when run by two reputable lab centres, came out positive. The young man is Chief's son."

"Did you tell Chief your finding before he died?"

"Yes, I did. We were both making inquiries about the boy when I discovered he was being arraigned for a criminal act. I wanted to find out more before letting Chief know, and when I discovered you were in the matter, I said I should call you."

"Chief planned to call a meeting with his family, to introduce the boy as his son. He had informed me about this and was intending to do so next week, only for me to hear he's dead."

"How did you find out about his death?"

"I called his number; it rang but he didn't answer it, and after a while the phone was switched off. I had to contact my source, who then informed me that Chief had just died and had been taken to the morgue. The truth is that I had tipped the gate man in a compound next to Chief's. The Fulani man made friends with the Hausa security guard at Chief's House. The Fulani man told me his friend had told him his *Oga* had just died, and that he doesn't trust the wife, who he said is wicked and might chase him away. He begged my source, that is, his Fulani friend, that if Chief's wife drives him away, he would stay with him a few nights before he could get a place. They took the corpse out very early, but my source said he saw the ambulance leave."

"That is pathetic. How do we go about this?"

"We will have to come up with a plan. But you must know that the wife is a fierce woman. She will be ready to fight. I also heard that Chief has a grown daughter from his first marriage. I need to find out more about the girl. You do your homework on the boy. What does he need to get his bail perfected?"

"He needs two sureties who are Government officers of Grade Level Fifteen and someone with landed property. I'm not

accustomed to getting paid sureties for clients. I don't know how to do that. I wish this was in Lagos where there are bondsmen. If only Abuja courts would introduce the scheme."

"I will get a few people I've worked with to help. But don't you think the boy is safer in prison? I know the family we are dealing with. They are dangerous."

"If you can get the sureties ready, we'll get him out and then we will worry about his safety. If they are that dangerous, as you say, I don't suggest he stay in the prison either. It's better if we get him to a safe house, or get him out of town."

"Chief Onu is worth billions. His wife would do anything to get anyone out of the way. I want you to talk to the boy. Let him understand the dangers ahead and be prepared for war. I don't know if Chief left any will. We will find out about that," Chris stated, slightly authoritative. He was older in age than Tim, so he took advantage of Tim's non-egoistic posture as a lawyer. Tim was so simple; he didn't like being addressed as "barrister". He would often say that "barrister" is not a title.

"Would you find out about his death? He may have been murdered." Tim asked.

"I can, but that shouldn't be our focus now. Our aim is to get this boy his share in the man's fortune and get our cut from it. You have to convince him that it's worth the fight. Have you seen his mother?"

"I haven't heard about her. He never mentioned her."

"We need to find her. That woman must be some hard nut, considering the worrisome look on Chief's face when we met. She has to be brought into this."

"Okay then, I will get to the boy. Let's meet again in a few days as things unfold."

Chris thanked Tim for coming and saw him to the door.

Tim stepped out of the meeting, enthusiastic about a promising future. He'd taken the boy's case without expecting much and when the boy couldn't pay him, he'd decided to do the case pro bono. After all, he had always wished to approach the Legal Aid Council to get briefs of indigent persons, but his commitment at the office wouldn't let him. Who would think that Emeka the guard was heir to Chief Onu's wealth? And the boy wasn't even aware of this. It was like someone in a pool of water while soap lather burned his eyes. He must see the boy urgently, he thought, despite the growing pile of tasks that demanded his attention from his seniors at the office. He wouldn't miss this great opportunity.

He stepped out of the plaza. The street was as busy when he arrived. He quickened his pace towards where he parked his car, while these thoughts ran through his mind. What was on his mind was to get home, take a bath, eat, and come up with a plan to see Emeka at Kuje prison. He hurried up to where he'd parked his car.

The car wasn't there!

The damn Toyota Corolla, 2009 model, black colour, wasn't where he left it.

Tim froze. Dozen things ran through his mind. Where would he start from without a car and his case files in the car? How on earth would he start all over on the cases? The evidence and exhibits were all gone. There were over twenty case files in the car.

A colleague had once told him not to put those case files in his car, that it was dangerous. He didn't see the danger in it. It was his car and he didn't lend it to anyone. Keeping those files in the office really wasn't smart. He didn't want his principal to notice his private practice, on the side; he wouldn't approve

of it. Most seniors, mostly Senior Advocates, pay other lawyers peanuts, yet some wouldn't let you grow. They felt since they pay you, they own you. You had to handle whatever personal brief you got in secret, and you couldn't resign, because you needed their office for the research, library, and the feel of an office.

He looked around for who to ask, muttering, "But it was here. I mean, I parked the car here, like this," gesturing how he parked the car.

"Excuse me, please, did you see the car I just parked here?" he asked a passerby.

"I didn't," the lady responded and continued, visibly angry over the seemingly stupid question she'd been asked.

"Excuse me, I parked my car here a while ago, did you see anyone move it?" he asked another lady running point of sale business under an umbrella.

"I didn't. Sorry!" She continued what she was doing.

Tim could no longer hold it in. It was like some nightmare you wished had never happened. He removed his suit jacket, threw it on the sidewalk, and screamed.

"Oh God! My car has been stolen. My car, my life! All my practice books, materials, and clients' case files, gone. I'm finished." He sobbed.

People gathered around, some to inquire, some to console him, but none of that mattered anymore. The car was gone.

He had to inform Chris, he thought. He started running towards Chris's office. Surprised at his sudden pace, some of the men in the crowd that had gathered ran after him, believing he had gone mad and might hurt himself.

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