WEALTH

A letter on the wealthiest why to those who seek "who".

Imagine a tomorrow that honours yesterday's colours.

Imagine a company that defines self not only by the aspirational, but by the formational-

the oops, the yeses, the no, the not yets, and the maybes.

Imagine you never forgot your heart-your gold before the shining.

Imagine the silence did not need suppressants in their many, many shades.

Imagine you began as you became.

Tracing the writing on the wall.

I remember the day you woke up, violin in hand, and decided you wanted to do music.

You could sing, and the teen church instructor assured you that you were the light of the world.

So you signed up for a talent hunt-barely coasted through the auditions, then dropped out anyway.

"You have talent, undeniably so," the judges said.

"But you could do with some refining. It was nice to have you on the show..."

You hung your head, but soon enough Mama looked her proud son in the eye and reminded him he had exams to pass.

Not that it mattered-you'd always been top of the class anyway.

So what if you didn't have a music career?

Your big brains would be the ticket out of the trenches for you and yours.

You sniffled and accepted the ice cream bribe.

Walking down those mammoth halls swarming with parents and peers, you figured all was well again.

I remember your toy remote contraption-half actual TV remote, half cardboard, sticks, and glue.

(Your dad threatened to send you to boarding school if you so much as touched the TV remote.)

Yes, that one.

I remember when it worked-and no one had to suffer the "go bring me the remote" pandemic again, at least for a while.

One push of the controller, and that car-remote, with bottle caps for wheels, rolled around the small living room of your otherwise cramped family house.

Mama cheered.

Your annoying big sister smirked-half proud, half sneer.

So those hours spent wailing over the documentary channel paid off in some way?

You could see it in the reluctant way she admired the boxy, things-might-fall-apart-soon contraption as it crawled to a stop by her feet.

Even your dad-oh so manly, of all the men in the house you'd ever known-had a proud glint in his eyes.

Until the day it stopped working.

Smallie, the last born, had rolled onto it in her sleep.

And suddenly, the whole house turned on you-both the remote and their temporary remote-fetcher were gone.

"This stubborn boy, did I not tell you not to touch that remote?"

Who else but your dad would spearhead the attacks?

That meant three weeks of kitchen duty-and a biweekly sermon on the cost of electronics in the market.

I remember when you'd sketch the next dress Mama would wear to her August meeting.

Proudly, she'd hand your drawings over to her tailor, who would then proceed to botch the design.

But Mama, content to wear some semblance of what her daughter had envisioned, would prance like a peacock.

"Ada, my fashionista!" she'd beam.

"See your mother na-negodu nma!" (Look at this beauty!)

You'd wince-half cringing at the criminal rendition of your precious design, half proud that something you conceived while staring at the onion bulb came to life on her rotund frame.

Who knows? Maybe one day, real stick-figure models would strut your designs down a runway for the world to see.

A girl could dream. A girl could dare.

I would be remiss to forget the week you won your first spelling bee, a Bible verse recital game, and a scholarship-all in one go.

Oh, star child! Have you forgotten?

The neighbors' kids got an earful each time you passed by:

"Does he have two heads? Why can't you learn from your mate?"

Do you remember?

Or have you forgotten where you hid the fifth talent?

Have you forgotten where your wealth lies, my son?

Key Highlights

bricolage toy invention, talent show rejection and resilience, top of the class academic pride, homemade fashion sketches, mama's pride and misinterpretation, spelling bee and scholarship week, forgotten fifth talent metaphor, cultural phrases (negodu nma), emotional confrontation with the past, familial expectations vs creative ambition

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