

EKWEKWE'S METHOD

WRITTEN BY

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FADE IN:

BLACK

Over it, we hear a theme song and...

VOICE
(Female)
Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to
our weekly program...

We continue to hear the voice and then we go to...

INT. V.I.A STATION - STUDIO - DAY

A WOMAN sits with a YOUNG MAN in an interview. She is the HOST (45), the person we are hearing her voice. She is looking at the camera as she continues.

HOST
...of intellectuals in our society.
I am your host Michelle Davidson.
In this week's episode, we welcome
one of our illustrious sons from
the U.S. He is none other than Mr.
Stephen Ekwewe.
(To Stephen)
Mr. Ekwewe, you are welcomed to
our programme.

STEPHEN
Thank you.

He waves to the screen rather awkwardly. We look closely at him.

He is 34. Sad eyes. He has not shaved for a few days. He looks a bit restless as if he will rather be somewhere else doing something else.

HOST
I'm sure everyone will be excited
to hear your story.

Silence. Stephen's gaze is fixed to the floor.

HOST (CONTD)
(Quietly)
Mr. Ekwewe?

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

I thought this programme is supposed to be about science.

HOST

Yes it is.

STEPHEN

Why do i have to tell people about myself?

HOST

We hope to inspire our young undergraduates in higher institutions.

STEPHEN

I hardly see myself as inspiring.

HOST

You are, Mr. Ekwewe. You have already written your name in the world's history books while most of your mates are still eating from their mother's plates.

This seems to strike something in Stephen.

STEPHEN

Do you think i am better than all of them? Do you think i am smarter?

HOST

You had straight A's in school.

STEPHEN

A lot of people had straight A's in school.

HOST

You are different.

STEPHEN

I was lucky.

HOST

To have straight A's?

STEPHEN

No. To make something out of it. A greater percentage of people with straight A's in school ended up without a job. The ones that do

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN (cont'd)
have a job are barely making ends meet. Why? Because they are ordinary first class graduate. You don't earn respect in this country by the intellectual things you are capable of doing. You earn respect by how much money you acquired or if i may say, steal.

Silence. Beat.

HOST
(To the camera)
We will take a short break and we will be right back.

The theme song sounds again and the make up crew come into our view. They try to redress the Host's makeup but she is upset and waves them away.

A man enters our view. This is Stephen's personal aide and manager, PATRICK, 30.

HOST (CONTD)
(To Patrick)
Please talk to him. He can't go on like this.

PATRICK
(To Stephen)
I thought we discussed behaviour on camera.

STEPHEN
This wasn't the interview you told me.

PATRICK
Steve, please get yourself together and in an hour, we will be out of here. Remember, you have a local flight to catch in...
(Looks at his watch)
1 hour 57 minutes.

STEPHEN
What? I thought I had the whole day.

PATRICK
Not anymore.

(CONTINUED)

Patrick steps back out of view. The Host adjust herself as...

SHOW DIRECTOR
We are back in 5...4...

The director counts down with his fingers as we hear the theme song again.

HOST
Welcome back. If you are just joining us, we are here once again on another episode of intellectuals in our society...
(So on)

As we continue to hear her voice, we go to --

EXT. STEPHEN'S HOUSE - TO ESTABLISH

We are looking at a house built in the 70's. 4 rooms and a sitting room. To the left and right of the house are tall buildings which are students lodges.

Our house of interest looks kind of odd and out of place.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

A kettle sits on a stove at a corner.

A much younger Stephen sits reading a book. His eyes moving quickly from one end of the page to another. He quickly turns a page and continues to read. Almost as if he is scanning through the book.

An older woman enters. She is Stephen's grandma (68). Chubby. She has a plate of raw pap with her.

GRANDMA
Is the water ready?

STEPHEN
It will be ready in 6 seconds.

And almost immediately, the water starts boiling. We see the steam escape from the kettle's mouth.

STEPHEN (CONTD)
If the kettle is clean, it takes approximately 7 minutes 14 seconds for the water to boil. If it is
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN (CONTD) (cont'd)
covered in soot, it takes
approximately 12 minutes 23 seconds
to boil.

GRANDMA
Go get ready for school.

Stephen leaves.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - MORNING

Books scatters on the bed. One of them is a textbook and
light blue in colour. "Principle of Biochemistry" is written
boldly on it.

Another one is a novel and written on it is "Fathers and
sons".

Stephen enters our view. Ready for school.

GRANDMA (O.S)
(Calls out)
Stephen, you are going to be late
for school!

STEPHEN
(Calls back)
I'm coming grandma!

INT. SITTING ROOM - MORNING

Grandma is sitting turning the plate of pap. Stephen enters.
She looks him over. Smiles.

GRANDMA
Come over here child.

Stephen walks over and they hug.

GRANDMA (CONTD)
Education is the key my child.
Always remember that.

STEPHEN
Okay grandma.

GRANDMA
And make sure you...

Stephen finishes for her.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

...Stay out of trouble. I know
grandma.

GRANDMA

Sit down and eat.

STEPHEN

I can't. I'm already late.

He starts for the door.

GRANDMA

You can't go to school on an empty
stomach.

He turns and scoops a spoon of the pap into his mouth and
before she could protest, he is out of the door.

EXT. STEPHEN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Stephen walks out and into the streets.

EXT. STREETS - MORNING

He walks and pass people. All are young and they are
students.

Friends chat and laugh as they walk.

Some others have earphones on and nodding their heads.

2 boys stands and hails a third who joins them.

We hear loud music from a car whose driver is driving a
little roughly. The windows are rolled down as it passes us
and we make out 5 or 6 students in it.

Stephen walks alone. He flags down a TRICYCLE (a.k.a "KEKE
NAPEP")

INT. KEKE NAPEP - DAY

Stephen enters.

STEPHEN

School gate.

As the driver pulls away.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN (CONTD)

Hey, I remember you. You are Osita.
You had 4.53 G.P.A last year.

OSITA

4.83 actually. Graduated top of my
class. That's me 2 years ago. You
are probably wondering what I'm
doing driving this.

STEPHEN

Uhm...

OSITA

This is the kind of job a Nigerian
degree can get a low class
individual like me.

(Then)

Just pray you don't end up this
way.

EXT. UNIVERSITY COMPOUND - MORNING

It is a new academic year. The atmosphere is lively.
Students are moving about doing what students do.

EXT. BIOCHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTAL BUILDING - DAY

Stephen walks in the crowd. He reaches the building. 2 boys
are talking in low tones. Stephen walks past them.

BOY #1

Speak of the devil.

They glare at Stephen as he enters one of the classrooms.

BOY #2

I wish this guy is not in this
department.

BOY #1

I wish he is not a student here at
all.

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

Stephen settles down at the back of the class. Other
students enter and sit down. Stephen sits alone.

INT. BIOCHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTAL BUILDING - MORNING

2 men are walking. One of them is the Head of the department, PROFESSOR IDAH, 46.

The other one wearing a spectacle is AKACHUKWU ONYIA, 31. A junior lecturer in the same department. He looks more of 21 than 31. He has boyish features. No bears at all.

PROFESSOR IDAH

The department has decided to move you to an office.

(Beat)

You should count yourself lucky.

AKACHUKWU

I hope i get my own now.

Professor Idah stops. Glares at him. Akachukwu swallows a lump.

PROFESSOR IDAH

You get your own office when i say so.

He walks away. Akachukwu follows him. They reach an office.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

They enter.

PROFESSOR IDAH

This is it.

Akachukwu looks around. There are 2 desks. The room seems a bit small for 2 adults to share. Akachukwu is clearly disappointed. He expected more.

Professor Idah walks away.

AKACHUKWU

(To himself)

Who would have guessed?

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Akachukwu is carrying piles of papers and files. He enters and dumps them on the desk. Lets out breathe. Straightens himself.

(CONTINUED)

At a corner, a little shelf houses papers, scientific journals, scientific articles, student's seminal reports, projects etc. He has moved in.

Professor Idah appears at the door.

PROFESSOR IDAH
Are you not done yet?

AKACHUKWU
Almost, sir.

Professor Idah gives him a PRINTED RESULT SHEET. Akachukwu takes it.

PROFESSOR IDAH
Make photocopies and put that on the notice board.

AKACHUKWU
I have a class in less than 10 minutes.

PROFESSOR IDAH
I don't care. Get it done today.

He walks away. Akachukwu looks at the paper. There are names, registration numbers and grades of about 40 students on it. The grades are poor.

A young female Lecturer enters and sits in the other chair. She shares the office with Akachukwu.

FEMALE LECTURER
I hope you are getting ready.

AKACHUKWU
Ready for what?

FEMALE LECTURER
For the annual school quiz competition. Have you found someone to represent the faculty?

AKACHUKWU
(Sighs)
No, Not yet.

FEMALE LECTURER
You don't have a lot of time.

AKACHUKWU

I know. I will worry about that later.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Students are seated. Akachukwu is in front of them. He is rounding up his lecture on glycolytic pathway..

AKACHUKWU

...We arrive at pyruvate which is the product of glycolysis. We will stop here today. Any questions?

(Beat)

As usual, no questions.

Stephen raises his hand.

AKACHUKWU

Yes?

Stephen stands. The 2 boys we saw earlier exchange glances.

STEPHEN

Sir, i have been interested in sugars for a while and i have been wondering how they are transported from their point of storage to the cells that need them?

AKACHUKWU

Good question. Do you know what Gluts are?

STEPHEN

Yes sir. They are sugar transporters found on cells through which sugars enter the cells.

Students begin to murmur.

AKACHUKWU

You have answered your question.

STEPHEN

No sir, i have not.

Everyone keeps quiet.

AKACHUKWU

What is your name?

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

Stephen Ekwewe.

AKACHUKWU

Okay, Mr Ekwewe. Can you rephrase your question?

STEPHEN

Sir, you just told us that glucose is stored in the liver in the form of glycogen.

AKACHUKWU

That's right.

STEPHEN

And the Gluts are found on the surfaces of... let's say, the cells of the heart.

AKACHUKWU

Okay.

STEPHEN

Now, how will the sugars move from the liver to the heart?

AKACHUKWU

Through the blood.

STEPHEN

How will the liver cells push the sugars out into the blood?

Silence. Akachukwu searches his brain for the answer. He stands there looking at Stephen. Beat.

AKACHUKWU

Everyone, this is your assignment and it will be submitted next tomorrow. It is 10 marks. So be serious with it.

(To Stephen)

See me in my office right away.

All the students begin to murmur. They are not happy with our guy.

Akachukwu walks out and all the students start accusing Stephen of asking a question.

Stephen gathers his books. Reaches the door.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

Just so you know, I'm the next big thing waiting to happen in this school.

The students burst into a rain of insult on Stephen as he walks out.

INT. BIOCHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTAL BUILDING - DAY

Akachukwu walks up to the notice board and pins the results.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY

Akachukwu sits. Stephen stands.

AKACHUKWU

Your name sounded familiar when you said it in class earlier. Then it struck me. I read your conclusion on how plants consume sugar in the last exam. Which textbook did you get that?

STEPHEN

No textbook sir. It's just something I'm always thinking.

AKACHUKWU

2 things. (1) I'm impressed. (2) It's worth looking into.

STEPHEN

It's just a conclusion. Probably nothing serious.

AKACHUKWU

Stop undermining yourself.

(Beat)

Anyway, there is something else. I have chosen you to represent the faculty in the quiz competition.

STEPHEN

What? No.

AKACHUKWU

Why?

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

The quiz is stupid. I will rather
be doing something else.

INT. BIOCHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTAL BUILDING - DAY

Students gather at the notice board to check their results.
Their faces do not look good. Most of them failed.

A girl checks her result and jumps up in joy.

GIRL #1

Yes!

GIRL #2

What did you get?

GIRL #1

40. E.

EXT. BIOCHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTAL BUILDING - DAY

Stephen walks out. The 2 boys that dislike him are here. For
some reason, they are happy at the moment.

BOY #1

Student Professor. How you dey?

BOY #2

You don see result?

Stephen looks at them in surprise.

BOY #1

Nobody get A.

INT. BIOCHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTAL BUILDING - DAY

Stephen stares at the result on the notice board. He is
upset.

EXT. BIOCHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTAL BUILDING - DAY

Professor Idah walks to his car. Stephen hurries over to
him.

STEPHEN

Sir, i will like to talk to you.

Professor Idah didn't stop.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR IDAH
About what?

STEPHEN
The result. Cell and molecular
biology.

PROFESSOR IDAH
Come to my office tomorrow.

He reaches his car and brings out the key.

STEPHEN
You gave me a B, sir.

The professor opens his car door.

STEPHEN (CONTD)
I deserve an A.

Professor Idah stops. Turns to Stephen. Looks him over.

PROFESSOR IDAH
What did you just say?

STEPHEN
I answered all your questions and i
wrote all there is to write. So, i
feel i deserve an A in your course
sir.

PROFESSOR IDAH
You deserve an A? How funny.

He enters his car and drives away.

INT. BOOKSHOP - DAY

Stephen enters. still upset. A girl approaches. She is
JULIET (21). Pretty. In the way that makes your jaw drop.

JULIET
Do you need anything?

STEPHEN
Yes. 80 leaves exercise book.

Juliet brings one and hands it over to him.

JULIET
Anything else?

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

Pen.

Juliet brings a pen and gives to him.

JULIET

It's going to finish before the end
of the semester.

Stephen is lost.

JULIET (CONTD)

The book.

STEPHEN

Oh... It's not for lectures.

EXT. STEPHEN'S HOUSE - DAY

Grandma is out spreading washed clothes. Stephen walks into our view.

GRANDMA

You are home early.

He didn't say anything. He enters the house. Grandma sighs.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - DAY

Stephen takes out the EXERCISE BOOK from his bag. He takes a seat. Places the book and the pen on the desk. Stares at them for a while. Like he is summoning his inner self.

Then he picks up the pen. Opens the book and starts writing.

ON SCREEN: 03:45 PM.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - SAME

Stephen is now on the floor. He is still writing. He is at the middle of the book.

ON SCREEN: 09:38 PM.

He writes for a while and stops. He stares into space.

STEPHEN (V.O)

I was disappointed.

INT. V.I.A STATION - STUDIO - DAY

Stephen and the Host from the opening sequence.

STEPHEN

That was the first time it dawned
on me that most if not all our
teachers feed students what was fed
to them when they were students.

HOST

Teachers do not know everything.

STEPHEN

At least, he should have pointed me
to a direction.

HOST

Moving on. We don't have to know
about the girls you met while in
school. Just the part --

STEPHEN

Everyone i talk about today
contributed something to get me
where i am right now.

(Beat)

I did a lot of research.

HOST

What research?

STEPHEN

The assignment.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - ANOTHER NIGHT

A lot of textbooks are on the floor beside Stephen. Stephen
sits reading one of them. A knock and then Grandma opens the
door.

GRANDMA

Stephen, your food is getting cold.

STEPHEN

(Without looking up)

I'm coming.

Grandma sighs and closes the door behind her. Stephen is
still immersed in his reading.

INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - DAY

Stephen is reading a big Biochemistry textbook. About 5 or 6 others are on the desk. They are as big as the one he is reading.

INT. CYBERCAFE - DAY

Stephen is browsing the web.

COMPUTER SCREEN: We see a heading that says "Science direct" and just below it we see the words "No search found"

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY

Akachukwu sits with Stephen.

AKACHUKWU

You want me to give your class another assignment?

STEPHEN

Yes sir.

AKACHUKWU

Why will i do that?

STEPHEN

Because the question has no answer. Yet.

AKACHUKWU

You are kidding.

STEPHEN

The world does not know in details, the mechanism of the efflux of sugars in the human body. At least not yet.

AKACHUKWU

How did you know that?

Stephen opens his bag and brings out a paper. The EXERCISE BOOK falls out. He didn't know. He gives the paper to Akachukwu. Akachukwu goes through it. Beat.

AKACHUKWU (CONTD)

You are definitely going for the quiz competition.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

But --

AKACHUKWU

No buts.

Akachukwu stands and goes over to the books on the little shelf. He takes the quiz manual and offers it to Stephen.

AKACHUKWU (CONTD)

The rules. Take it.

Stephen reluctantly takes the manual.

AKACHUKWU (CONTD)

And read books on current affairs.
You will be fine.

Stephen leaves. Only then did Akachukwu see the EXERCISE BOOK on the floor. He picks it up.

INT. STEPHEN'S HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - DAY

Grandma is here with a man. He is Stephen's uncle, CLEM, (40's). They are in the middle of a conversation.

UNCLE CLEM

Mama, let me build a bigger house here. All our neighbours have done that and they are making big money.

GRANDMA

It is not my concern. My only concern is Stephen. He must finish school.

UNCLE CLEM

No one is disputing that. I pay his school fees remember.

GRANDMA

That boy is too smart not to have at least a degree. You see about that and his trust fund will get him started after school.

Uncle Clem is not happy with this.

UNCLE CLEM

Why are you holding me back, Mama? It's not as if i gave birth to him.

(CONTINUED)

GRANDMA

You are complaining. You are taking care of your brother's son and you are complaining.

CLEMENT

Mama, Stephen is a smart kid but education makes no difference around here. He might as well start something with his trust fund now.

GRANDMA

(Stern)

Before you build anything here, Stephen will finish school and you will make certain of that.

As Uncle Clem continues to plead, we see Stephen's door is ajar. He slowly closes it.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - MORNING

Stephen picks his bag and looks for the EXERCISE BOOK. It is not there. He looks some more. It's nowhere to be found. He searches his room. Nothing.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - MORNING

Akachukwu picks the EXERCISE BOOK and stares at it for a while. Then he opens it and slowly sits in his chair.

THE EXERCISE BOOK: As he turns the pages, we see writings, drawings, structures, numbers and some scientific equations.

To us, these things are jargon.

INT. PROFESSOR IDAH'S OFFICE - DAY

The Professor is sitting in his chair reading a journal. Stephen enters.

STEPHEN

Good day sir.

The Professor looks at him and goes back to his journal.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

I am here about the result.

(Beat)

Sir, with all due respect, I want a remark.

(CONTINUED)

The Professor drops the journal.

PROFESSOR IDAH
What is your name?

STEPHEN
Stephen Ekwewe.

PROFESSOR IDAH
Listen. I have been teaching that course for 11 years and no one has ever got a B talk more of an A. I broke my code to give you a B.

STEPHEN
A code?

PROFESSOR IDAH
Grade A is for me. Grade B is for a genius. C is for intelligent students. D is for those that wet my throat. E and F are for others.

STEPHEN
I have never gotten anything less than an A, sir.

PROFESSOR IDAH
Was that suppose to impress me? Look here Stephen Ekwe...

STEPHEN
Ekwewe.

PROFESSOR IDAH
I am the head of this department and what i say is what you will do whether you like it or not. Now, leave my office.

STEPHEN
So you do admit I'm a genius.

The Professor's eye brows narrows.

STEPHEN (CONTD)
Grade B is for genius. I guess A will be for immortals.

PROFESSOR IDAH
Do you want to graduate or spend the rest of your life shoveling shit?

(CONTINUED)

(Beat)

Choose your next words carefully
boy. It might alter your life.

Stephen slowly walks away.

INT. DEAN'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Stephen closes the door and leaves our view. He is upset. We see the inscription on the door. It says "Dean".

INT. VICE CHANCELLOR'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

The Vice Chancellor's secretary sits as Stephen hands over a brown envelope to her. She takes it.

SECRETARY

The V.C will go through it and he
will get back to you.

Stephen leaves.

The secretary opens the envelope and brings out a letter. She holds it to read and we slowly MOVE IN on the letter.

As we slowly MOVE OUT, we notice a DIFFERENT HAND holding the letter and then we realize we are in...

INT. PROFESSOR IDAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Professor Idah is holding the letter. He drops it on his desk and sits back in his chair.

INT. BIOCHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTAL BUILDING - DAY

Akachukwu and the young female lecturer rounds the corner to find...

Stephen standing with Professor Idah, who is doing everything he can to intimidate the boy and put him in his place.

PROFESSOR IDAH

(Irate)

...What you are is an ignoramus.
You think the Vice Chancellor can
help you? Who do you think you are?
I don't know how you managed to
make A's since your first year...

(CONTINUED)

As we continue to hear Professor Idah giving it to Stephen in the background, we turn to...

AKACHUKWU AND FEMALE LECTURER.

They stand side by side. The female lecturer is impressed with Stephen's record.

FEMALE LECTURER

Wow.

AKACHUKWU

I know.

BACK TO PROFESSOR IDAH AND STEPHEN.

PROFESSOR IDAH

...from this moment, your luck has ran out. The Dean cannot help you. The V.C cannot help you. I am bigger than all of them put together. You just made matters worse for yourself in this department boy. Now, leave my sight.

Stephen walks away. Professor Idah turns. Glares at Akachukwu and the small crowd around. Without been told, they disperse immediately.

EXT. UNIVERSITY COMPOUND - DAY

Stephen sits in a lonely place. No student in sight. Juliet is walking by. She sees him and goes over.

JULIET

Hello.

STEPHEN

Hi. What are you doing here?

JULIET

I thought you might need some company.

STEPHEN

Yeah. Okay.

Juliet sits beside him.

JULIET

You are always alone Stephen.

STEPHEN

You know my name?

JULIET

Everyone knows your name. You are quite popular.

STEPHEN

I am?

JULIET

Everyone knows the boy that bangs A's.

STEPHEN

Well that streak has been broken.

JULIET

What?

STEPHEN

Apparently, a professor in my department disagrees with my brain. He gave me a B.

JULIET

Is that why you feel sorry for yourself?

STEPHEN

I deserve an A. I know i will have at least 90 marks. He deliberately gave me 69.

Juliet is silent for a moment. Beat.

JULIET

It doesn't change anything.

STEPHEN

What?

JULIET

It hasn't changed your first class status. I think your problem is that you set high standards for yourself.

Stephen stares at her.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN (V.O)
I don't know her at all but in 3
minutes, she has diagnosed me.

STEPHEN
Are you a student here?

JULIET
Yes. Part time.

STEPHEN
Course of study?

JULIET
Psychology.

STEPHEN (V.O)
I didn't know where I got the
idea...

INT. V.I.A STATION - STUDIO - DAY

STEPHEN
...but for some reason, i have
always seen Psychology as creepy.

HOST
Psychology is good. They study
human behaviours and more.

STEPHEN
Well, I don't see it that way.

HOST
Before your were discovered, how
did you manage to keep a low
profile?

STEPHEN
I don't have friends in school. I
was always... by myself. Besides, I
didn't go to class for most of my
first and second year.

HOST
Why?

STEPHEN
I already know what they will
teach.

(CONTINUED)

HOST

Was it that easy for you?

STEPHEN

It was never easy. I just preferred reading on my own.

HOST

Some might think you are afraid of your teachers.

STEPHEN

No. What i felt and still feel for them is pity.

HOST

Why that?

STEPHEN

Because they are always angry. They work so hard and earn very little. Sometimes, they don't get paid for months.

Everyone is silent. Beat.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

So, the quiz competition.

INT. BOOKSHOP - EVENING

Stephen and Juliet sits. They are in the middle of a conversation.

JULIET

You don't want to go?

STEPHEN

The quiz is dumb. Even if i have minus 100 points, i will still win.

JULIET

Don't be too sure.

Juliet stands and goes to the shelf. She brings a book on current affairs and gives it to him.

JULIET (CONTD)

You will need this.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN
No, I don't.

JULIET
Stephen, just do it. For me.

Stephen takes the book.

PRELAP the clapping and cheering of students.

INT. UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - DAY

There are 2 men and a woman sitting on the stage facing the students. They are THE PANEL.

On stage are 10 chairs. 6 empty and 4 occupied by the remaining contestants. All have been issued with a writing material and they have numbers pinned to their clothes.

We spot Stephen among them. He has the number 10. The race is on and they are in the middle of the quiz.

ADMINISTRATOR #1
Contestant 6, pick a question.

CONTESTANT 6
Question number 89.

ADMINISTRATOR #1
In what year did Nigeria abolish
its 3 region structure and created
12 states?

Contestant 6 thinks for some time and the buzzer goes off.

ADMINISTRATOR #1
Your time is up.
(To all Contestants)
The question is open.

CONTESTANT 3
1958

ADMINISTRATOR #1
Wrong.

CONTESTANT 10 (STEPHEN)
1974

ADMINISTRATOR #1
Wrong.

(CONTINUED)

CONTESTANT 5

1967

ADMINISTRATOR #1

Correct.

There are cheers and clapping from the audience. We notice it is from one side. Probably students from contestant 5's faculty.

ADMINISTRATOR #1 (CONTD)

We have come to the end of this section. Let us hear the results.

ADMINISTRATOR #2

(Reads out from a paper)

At the end of this section, contestant 3 scored 9 points, contestant 5 scored 18 points, contestant 6 scored 10 points while contestant 10 scored 18 points.

INT. V.I.A STATION - STUDIO - DAY

HOST

A tie. Looks like you were lucky.

STEPHEN

I purposely did it. I didn't want to create the impression that all the questions were a joke to me.

INT. UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - DAY

Back to the quiz competition.

ADMINISTRATOR #1

We will like to bid contestants 3 and 6 farewell. This is the end of the road for them.

Contestants 3 and 6 move off the stage.

ADMINISTRATOR #1 (CONTD)

This is the final round. When the question is asked, contestants are required to write the answers and show us. If one of you gets it right, the person wins. If both of you get it right or wrong, we ask another question. Is that clear?

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN CONTESTANT 5
Clear. Yes sir.

ADMINISTRATOR #1
We start. What is the full meaning
of NASA?

Stephen and contestant 5 write something on the paper they
have and submit. The administrator looks at it and then...

ADMINISTRATOR #1
Looks like we have a winner. He is
contestant 10, Stephen Ekwewe.

There are cheers from the audience but Stephen just sits
there. His face deadpan.

EXT. UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - LATER

Akachukwu stands shaking hands with Lecturers from other
departments and faculties.

Students trickle out and Stephen steps out. Akachukwu goes
over to him.

AKACHUKWU
I know what you were doing during
the quiz.

Stephen looks at him.

AKACHUKWU (CONTD)
You purposely failed some
questions.

STEPHEN
It doesn't matter.

AKACHUKWU
Don't do that in the state
competition.

They pose for a photographer to take their picture.

HOST (V.O)
Did you do it again?

STEPHEN (V.O)
Yes, at the state competition.
Though i won, i had other things in
mind.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - MORNING

MONTAGE: Stephen practices a speech.

--Stephen stands.

STEPHEN

Would you like to go out to dinner
with me some time?

(To himself)

No no no, i need to make it sound
important to me.

He clears his throat.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

Juliet, if not for you, i wouldn't
have won the two competitions. I
will like to take you out to thank
you... No no, that is not romantic
at all.

--He sits on the bed, shoulders straight and chest out

STEPHEN

Juliet, will you go out with me?

--He stands with hands in his pocket.

STEPHEN

You are the only friend i have. I
will like to celebrate my success
with you. Go out with me.

--He is down on one knee.

STEPHEN

Go out to dinner with me. We will
celebrate together.

(To himself)

Are you proposing?

--He stands and stares in space.

STEPHEN

You can do this. Just take a deep
breathe, walk up to her and say it.
Okay. Okay.

EXT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - DAY

Stephen stands outside. Juliet comes out.

STEPHEN
Hi.

JULIET
Hi.

STEPHEN
I have been looking everywhere for
you.

JULIET
Is there a problem?

STEPHEN
No -- no problem. I wanted to thank
you for the book you gave me. It
really helped.

JULIET
Okay.

STEPHEN
And that i will be going to Lagos
for the national quiz competition
next week.

JULIET
That's good.

Awkward silence between them.

JULIET (CONTD)
Is there something else you would
like to say?

STEPHEN
Uh... I uh... It's just that...
uh...

JULIET
Stephen?

STEPHEN
(Fast)
Me you dinner together.

JULIET
What?

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that --

JULIET

It's okay.

(Smiles)

I thought you will never ask.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Stephen and Juliet sit across from each other. 2 Plates of noodles in front of them. They eat silently.

JULIET

So, how are you preparing?

Stephen looks at her. Lost.

JULIET (CONTD)

The National quiz competition?

STEPHEN

Oh, Good.

They resume eating in silence. Beat.

Juliet's face turns pale. She starts breathing a little hard. Her left hand starts shaking. She hides it under the table. Stephen notices this.

STEPHEN

Are you okay?

JULIET

Yes. I just need to use the bathroom.

Juliet stands and walks away trying hard to hold her body from losing it.

INT. RESTAURANT BATHROOM - NIGHT

Juliet enters and locks the door just in time as her whole body let lose and she falls on the floor.

Her body shakes violently. White foamy substance escapes her mouth. Her neck forced to the left.

She lies there in a sorry and pathetic state as her body goes through an epileptic episode. It goes on for a while.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Stephen jams his fork on the noodles. Rolls it and pushes the fork in his mouth. Chews as he looks around. Spots Juliet returning to their table.

She takes her seat. Stephen looks her over.

STEPHEN
Are you okay now?

JULIET
Yes. Let's finish up and go. it is getting late.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Stephen and Juliet walk. Silent. Juliet takes his hand in hers. They look at each other. Having their moment.

Then out of no where, a guy blocks their path. He is huge.

JULIET
Andy?

ANDY
Juliet, what are you doing with this guy?

JULIET
None of your business.

Juliet makes a move to lead Stephen away but Andy blocks them.

ANDY
Juliet, you are mine.

JULIET
I will never be yours. Get that into your head.

STEPHEN
You heard her.

Andy is huge but fast. He pounces on Stephen and punches him. Stephen falls on the ground. Andy stomps him. Juliet screams for help.

Andy stomps him a few more times and then runs away. Stephen coughs. Blood.

Juliet helps him get up. He has been badly wounded.

INT. STEPHEN'S HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

The door slowly opens and Stephen enters. He makes his way to his room.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Stephen enters and locks the door. One hand on his stomach. He walks slowly to the bed and lies down, groaning in pain.

GRANDMA (O.S)
Stephen, is that you?

STEPHEN
(Fights back pain)
Yes grandma.

GRANDMA (O.S)
Are you okay? You sound hurt.

STEPHEN
I am fine grandma. I will see you
in the morning.

EXT. STEPHEN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Uncle Clem steps out of his car. Grandma approaches.

UNCLE CLEM
You sounded very urgent on the
phone.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - MORNING

Stephen is sits on the bed. One hand to his jaw. One side of his face swollen.

Grandma stands by the door. Uncle Clem stands somewhere in the room. He is pissed off.

UNCLE CLEM
You were out in the night fighting?

STEPHEN
I wasn't fighting. I was --

UNCLE CLEM
Shut up! If not for the way you
are, i would have flogged the
stubbornness out of you. Stupid
idiot.

(CONTINUED)

Uncle Clem walks out. Grandma takes one last look at Stephen and closes the door.

Stephen's phone starts ringing. We MOVE IN on it and see the caller I.D. It is JULIET.

INT. V.I.A STATION - STUDIO - DAY

STEPHEN

I missed the national quiz competition. I allowed myself to be distracted and i was angry.

HOST

(To the camera)

We will go for a break and when we come back, we will hear more of this exciting story.

We hear the theme song and the crew move in. One of them gives Stephen and the host a bottle water each. They drink.

HOST (CONTD)

You are telling the world everything.

STEPHEN

I want to.

HOST

You are an emotional man.

Stephen looks away and signals someone off screen. Patrick enters our view.

STEPHEN

Give me the cell phone.

Patrick reluctantly gives Stephen the phone.

PATRICK

Steve, what are you doing?

Stephen puts in a number and gives the phone back to him.

STEPHEN

Dial the number and set up a meeting.

PATRICK

What?

(CONTINUED)

SHOW DIRECTOR
15 seconds and we are back on.

PATRICK
Your schedule is full. You don't
have time for another meeting.

STEPHEN
Can you please do what i told you.

PATRICK
You will miss your flight.

SHOW DIRECTOR (O.S)
10 seconds.

PATRICK
It can't work Stephen. You don't
have the time.

STEPHEN
Make the call.

Patrick sighs and walks out of our view.

SHOW DIRECTOR
We are back in 5... 4... 3... 2...

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY

Akachukwu sits writing. Stephen enters.

STEPHEN
I'm sorry we lost at the nationals.

Akachukwu looks up from his work.

AKACHUKWU
Me too. Your replacement wasn't
good enough.

STEPHEN
I know what the quiz meant to you.
I hope to make it up to you
someday.

AKACHUKWU
You are meant for big things
Stephen. Stop hiding yourself.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN
I wasn't hiding.

AKACHUKWU
The good news is that the school
just discovered you. I'm sure they
will give you a job after
graduation.

Stephen laughs. Akachukwu is surprised at this.

STEPHEN
No thanks.

AKACHUKWU
You don't want to be a teacher?

STEPHEN
It is beneath me.

AKACHUKWU
Well, that is most unfortunate.

He opens his drawer and brings out the EXERCISE BOOK. He drops it on the desk.

AKACHUKWU (CONTD)
You forgot this here.

Stephen takes the book.

STEPHEN
I have been looking for it for a
long time. Did you read it?

AKACHUKWU
I saw things there i have not seen
in my life. It makes sense though.

(Beat)
With your permission, i will
prepare it as a proposal and
present it to the department.

STEPHEN
(Panics)
What?

AKACHUKWU
If the experiments you wrote there
can be done, i think we will arrive
at something.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

No sir. No proposal. No experiment.

AKACHUKWU

Stephen, do you know most scientific discoveries started as a mere hunch?

STEPHEN

Yes sir.

AKACHUKWU

(RE: Exercise book)

What you have there is more than a hunch. The logic in it is reasonable.

STEPHEN

What if the experiment fails?

AKACHUKWU

What others call failure in science is just a way we know what we are looking for cannot work.

Silence. Then...

STEPHEN

Why are you helping me?

AKACHUKWU

Because everyone deserves an opportunity to show what they have. It's just -- When I was a student, I had an opportunity to make a difference. I threw it away.

STEPHEN

So... I am some sort of redemption for you?

AKACHUKWU

Look, you have something here Stephen. This could be very huge. Trust me, you don't want to live a "what if" life. Believe in yourself.

Stephen nods and walks away. Akachukwu sits back in his chair. Stares in to space. Walking down memory lane.

(CONTINUED)

HOST (V.O)
Did he prepare the proposal?

STEPHEN (V.O)
He couldn't start after 3 weeks.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S HOUSE - DAY

Akachukwu opens the front door. Stephen walks in. Looks around.

STEPHEN
Wow. You didn't tell me you have swag. You are rich.

AKACHUKWU
I'm not.

They both take a seat. Stephen looks at him in surprise. Gestures around like "*Are you kidding me?*"

AKACHUKWU (CONTD)
This is one of my father's houses. I just live here.

STEPHEN
Still, you should be happy.

AKACHUKWU
I'm not. Apparently, I am a disappointed to my family.

Silence. Then...

AKACHUKWU (CONTD)
We are here to focus on you. So, let's just do that.

STEPHEN
Okay. To be honest with you, I don't know how to write a proposal.

AKACHUKWU
I can't write it either. I only understand fragments of your... insight and it is not enough to write a convincing proposal.

STEPHEN
So, what now?

(CONTINUED)

AKACHUKWU

You will write it. I will guide you.

STEPHEN (V.O)

From that moment on, we became a tag team.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY - MONTAGE

A small white board is set up on the other table in the office. There are structures, drawings, writings, etc on it.

Stephen is pointing them out and explaining them to Akachukwu. It appears he is not understanding anything.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

Stephen is reading a big textbook.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY - MONTAGE

Akachukwu is sitting. A laptop is open on the desk in front of him. Several books are also open on his desk. He is catching up.

INT. CYBERCAFE - DAY - MONTAGE

Stephen is browsing the web.

INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - DAY - MONTAGE

Akachukwu is reading big textbooks.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY - MONTAGE

The small white board is here. Stephen is explaining things to Akachukwu who nods this time.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Stephen is typing with Akachukwu's laptop.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY - MONTAGE

Akachukwu inserts a flash drive in the laptop and copies their work.

INT. CYBERCAFE - DAY - MONTAGE

Stephen waits while his work is being printed.

END SEQUENCE.

STEPHEN (V.O)

We finished in 5 weeks and went over to see the Head of Department, Professor Idah.

INT. PROFESSOR IDAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Professor Idah sits. Akachukwu and Stephen sits across from him. Professor Idah slowly turns the pages of the PROPOSAL.

PROFESSOR IDAH

There are no previous works?

AKACHUKWU

Yes sir. We are the first.

PROFESSOR IDAH

The first stage of... this could cost thousands.

AKACHUKWU

16,000 to be precise sir.

PROFESSOR IDAH

Okay. Let's go over it again. You want me to grant you access to use the departmental lab instruments for your research.

AKACHUKWU

Yes sir.

PROFESSOR IDAH

You know the rules Mr. Onyia. You don't have a Doctorate or a PhD yet.

AKACHUKWU

With all due respect sir, this thesis are not mine.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR IDAH
Whose is it?

Akachukwu glances at Stephen. The professor gets it. He drops the proposal on his desk.

PROFESSOR IDAH (CONTD)
Mr. Onyia, did you smoke something
or are you just plain stupid?

AKACHUKWU
Sir?

PROFESSOR IDAH
(RE: Proposal)
How could you think to present this
silly, stupid child's dream to me?

AKACHUKWU
Sir, if you could just consider --

PROFESSOR IDAH
There is nothing to consider.

AKACHUKWU
Sir --

PROFESSOR IDAH
I can't believe I'm discussing a
child's dream I'm sure will end up
fruitless, with you.

STEPHEN
Sir, the --

PROFESSOR IDAH
You are not permitted to speak.

Professor Idah picks the Proposal and throws it at Akachukwu.

PROFESSOR IDAH (CONTD)
I'm done talking about this. Get
out.

EXT. UNIVERSITY COMPOUND - DAY

Stephen and Akachukwu walks. Disappointment on their faces.

AKACHUKWU
We tried our best.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

Maybe if we are successful in the first stage, he will listen.

Akachukwu stops.

AKACHUKWU

We?

STEPHEN

Yes. We can gather the materials involved ourselves. We just need to find a way to get in the lab.

INT. V.I.A STATION - STUDIO - DAY

STEPHEN

At that moment, I didn't know exactly how we can achieve that but he looked at me and said "Don't worry. I have an idea..."

(So on)

As Stephen continues to speak, We MOVE OUT from him and turn to Patrick. He watches Stephen on stage for a while. The phone in his hand. He steps outside.

EXT. STUDIO - DAY

He looks at the phone and then dials the number Stephen put there.

PATRICK

Hello?

VOICE ON PHONE

(Female)

Hello. Who is on the line?

PATRICK

My name is Patrick. I am the PA to the CEO of Nigerian Global Research Foundation. I am calling to set up a meeting with you and my boss.

VOICE ON PHONE

Who is your boss?

PATRICK

Mr Stephen Ekwewe.

The line goes dead.

(CONTINUED)

PATRICK (CONTD)
(Into phone)
Hello? Hello?
(Looks at the phone)
Is she having a bad day or
something?

INT. V.I.A STATION - STUDIO - DAY

Patrick enters. The show is on a break and the host is standing talking to one of the crew members. We don't hear them. Patrick walks up to Stephen.

STEPHEN
(Anxious)
Did you make the call?

PATRICK
Yes.

STEPHEN
And?

PATRICK
It ended the second I mentioned
your name.

Stephen looks away.

PATRICK (CONTD)
Stephen, what is going on?

SHOW DIRECTOR
Everyone, brace yourselves. We are
coming back to the show now.

Patrick walks away. At the background, the host sit down and gets ready for a restart.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Stephen sits on his bed looking at a picture of a young couple with a toddler. A picture of his family.

The door opens and grandma enters.

GRANDMA
Your uncle just left. You didn't
say goodbye to him.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

He hates me.

Grandma is surprised at this. She sits on the bed.

GRANDMA

Don't say that child. Your uncle
loves you.

STEPHEN

I asked him for some money and he
told me to go away.

GRANDMA

(Sighs)

Don't worry. I will give you the
money tomorrow.

STEPHEN

Thank you grandma.

He hugs her and she holds on to him.

GRANDMA

Everything will be alright. You
will see.

EXT. BIOCHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTAL BUILDING - DAY

Stephen steps out and Juliet falls in line with him.

JULIET

Stephen, thank God you are okay.

Stephen is not saying anything. Beat.

JULIET (CONTD)

I called several times. You weren't
picking. I thought something worse
has happened.

STEPHEN

I'm fine.

JULIET

Stephen, I'm sorry. Andy was my boy
friend but i broke it off with him
a long time ago.

They round a corner. Akachukwu is coming the other way.

(CONTINUED)

AKACHUKWU

Good. You are here. I need to talk to you?

STEPHEN

(To Juliet)

I will see you later.

Juliet goes away.

AKACHUKWU

I spoke to the lab technician. He is going to leave the spare keys by the door tonight. This is your chance.

STEPHEN

Okay. Thank you sir.

AKACHUKWU

Let's just hope we both survive this.

EXT. DEPARTMENTAL LAB - NIGHT

Stephen finds the keys where it is hidden. He unlocks the door.

INT. DEPARTMENTAL LAB - NIGHT

He steps in. Flips a switch. Lights come on. Lab equipments sits in their place. Neatly arranged.

LATER

Stephen is wearing a lab coat. There are science equipments on the desk before him: test tubes in racks, beakers, conical flask, pipettes, etc. The beakers and conical flask each holds colourless liquids.

Stephen is slowly lowering the colourless liquid into the test tubes.

At a corner in the lab, a boiler is inserted in a container that holds water.

Stephen goes over. Removes the boiler from the container and carries it to the desk.

He inserts the test tubes which holds the colourless liquid in the container.

(CONTINUED)

LATER

Stephen prepares samples on slides. A microscope sits before him. He puts the slides in the microscope and views it.

MUCH LATER

The test tubes are in their racks. The liquid in them are still the same. Stephen picks the last one and with a rubber pipette, puts three drops of another liquid in it. He shakes it and the colour changes.

Stephen stands there staring at it. He can't believe his eyes. Then he breaks into a huge smile.

STEPHEN
(Excited)

Yes.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY

Akachukwu sits. Stephen is trying to hide his excitement without much success.

STEPHEN
I was right. There is a colour change.

AKACHUKWU
(Not sure)
It is a... good thing, right?

STEPHEN
Of course it is a good thing. The colour change in the solution indicates that the cells we isolated push out sugars in much the same way as they take in sugars.

AKACHUKWU
That's a known fact in science.

STEPHEN
Yes, but they do not know Ekwewe's method of doing that. If I'm right, this could be another unique class of sugar transporters.

AKACHUKWU
I see your point. So what's next?

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

To isolate whatever does that in the cells. Probably look at its structure and components.

(Then)

I feel like I'm missing something. Am I missing something?

AKACHUKWU

None that I can think of. We can't isolate the cell components here. We need a better place.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A LARGE MAN sits. He is Mr. Opabumi, (50's). Stephen and Akachukwu sits across from him. Mr. Opabumi runs a big laboratory in the city.

MR. OPABUMI

So, this is the boy you told me on phone.

AKACHUKWU

Yes.

MR. OPABUMI

I will be honest with you. The methods you are talking about are advanced. I'm not sure how much the boy knows.

AKACHUKWU

That is why we need you to handle the equipments yourself. Stephen here, will tell you exactly what to do.

The man sits back in his chair. Beat.

MR. OPABUMI

It will cost you.

AKACHUKWU

We will see what we can do.

MR. OPABUMI

Sorry. No money, no access to my equipments.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

How much?

MR. OPABUMI

250,000 naira. And you are paying
for the reagents and other things.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Stephen and Akachukwu stands. Akachukwu is angry.

AKACHUKWU

Are you crazy? How could you agree
to that?

STEPHEN

He has exactly what we need.

AKACHUKWU

Okay. How will you get the money?

STEPHEN

(Not sure)

I... we...

AKACHUKWU

Great. I funded the first phase of
our research. You should have
allowed me to do all the talking.

He walks away.

INT. BOOKSHOP - DAY

Juliet is arranging books on the shelves. Stephen enters.

STEPHEN

Hi.

Juliet looks at him.

JULIET

Good, you are here. Please help me
with those books.

Juliet points at a table. Stephen walks over and carries
about 8 or 9 books over to Juliet. She picks them one after
the other and put them on the shelf.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

I'm sorry.

JULIET

No, don't say that. I don't do those things girls do in Nigerian movies.

STEPHEN

What things?

JULIET

You know, the guy begs the girl and the girl pretends not to care.

Stephen laughs and Juliet joins in. She has put all the books on the shelf by now.

STEPHEN

What are you doing tomorrow?

JULIET

The usual.

STEPHEN

Maybe we can go out in the evening.

JULIET

Eh... i don't know. I have this thing i want to attend.

STEPHEN

What is that?

JULIET

A thing. If you join me, you will find out.

STEPHEN

Okay. As long as i get to be with you.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Someone is talking on stage. People are sitting and listening. We hear the speaker but we only see him in a slightly blurry image as our attention is on STEPHEN and JULIET. Stephen is bored.

SPEAKER

I tell you, prayer is a wonderful act. First, you need to believe in
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SPEAKER (cont'd)
God and call upon him. He will
answer you.

Stephen is looking at everywhere except the stage. Juliet is
focused on the speaker.

SPEAKER (CONTD)
God still answers prayers but there
are things you need to do as a man
for your dreams to come true. You
need to work very hard for your
breakthrough to come.

Stephen looks at the speaker. It seems something has caught
his attention.

SPEAKER (CONTD)
What you do today determines your
future. The actions you take today,
the decisions you make today, the
steps you take today, the things
you say today, the people you meet
today and how you interact with
them. Treat everyday of your life
as though it is the day of your
glory. The day God answers your
prayers. The day all your dreams
come true.

Stephen's whole attention is now on the speaker.

INT. BANK - DAY

Stephen sits across from a man. A banker. He is holding a
paper. Looking through it.

BANKER
You want access to the money.

STEPHEN
Yes.

BANKER
All of it?

STEPHEN
Yes.

BANKER
May I ask why?

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

For something important. Very important.

BANKER

You were supposed to have access to this money when you finish school.

STEPHEN

And when I'm 23 too. Last time I checked, I'm a year older.

BANKER

Okay. I will need your electric bills, 2 passport photograph, i.d card or permanent voters card...

Stephen is already digging through his bag.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Opabumi sits writing. A hand slaps a brown envelope on his desk. He looks up --

Stephen stands there. Mr Opabumi opens the envelope and there is the money. In cash.

He looks at Stephen again and nods his head.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

Stephen writes with intensity on a paper. Several others are scattered on the floor.

EXT. UNIVERSITY COMPOUND - DAY - MONTAGE

Stephen sits at a lonely place and write on his EXERCISE BOOK.

INT. OFFICE - DAY - MONTAGE

Stephen stands and explain things to Mr. Opabumi who nods.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

The class is empty. Stephen is writing symbols and equations on the white board with a marker. Several drawings are on the board.

INT. OFFICE - DAY - MONTAGE

Mr. Opabumi wears a lab coat. Stephen wears his. They head out.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Stephen falls on his bed exhausted.

END SEQUENCE.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - MORNING

Stephen wakes. He turns, stretches himself and yawns wildly. He looks at his wrist watch.

TIME: 10:40 AM.

He jumps from the bed.

STEPHEN

Jesus.

INT. BIOCHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTAL BUILDING - DAY

Akachukwu is walking to his office. Stephen hurries over to him.

STEPHEN

Sir, Sir.

Akachukwu stops and turns as Stephen walks up to him.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

Take a look at this.

Stephen hands over a paper to Akachukwu. Akachukwu eyes him before studying the paper. Beat.

AKACHUKWU

I can't believe this.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

Believe it sir. My thesis are correct.

AKACHUKWU

You do know this will be verified eventually?

STEPHEN

Whoever cares to do that can go ahead.

AKACHUKWU

Well done Stephen. This is good news.

(Something comes to his mind)

How did you --?

STEPHEN

Please don't ask.

Akachukwu's cell phone rings. He takes the call.

AKACHUKWU

Hello? Yes.

(Listens for a while)

Okay, i will be there.

He puts the phone away.

STEPHEN

Him?

AKACHUKWU

Yes him.

STEPHEN

Let me come with you.

AKACHUKWU

No. Go to class. I will talk to you when I get back.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Akachukwu sits across from Mr. Opabumi.

MR. OPABUMI

Mr Onyia, do you know why the eagle always carry the chicks away?

Akachukwu keeps quiet. He has a feeling he will tell him anyways.

(CONTINUED)

MR. OPABUMI (CONTD)

Because it can. You and your boy are sitting on a gold mine and you don't even know it.

AKACHUKWU

Is that what you see? Money?

MR. OPABUMI

Isn't that the point to all of this?

AKACHUKWU

Mr Opabumi. Why am I here?

MR. OPABUMI

I know the people. I have the resources. Together you and I can take this to the next level.

AKACHUKWU

Next level?

MR. OPABUMI

We publish. Gain recognition. The world scientist are always curious. I'm sure they will come calling. Money starts flowing in.

AKACHUKWU

The research is still in the early stages.

MR. OPABUMI

Who cares about the research?

AKACHUKWU

I do. This is a discovery of a life time. Why trade a few hundred when you can aim higher?

MR. OPABUMI

How higher can you get? This is Africa. The world doesn't care about what you have to offer? You make do with what you can when you can.

AKACHUKWU

We can still get grants and work on this research here. It will become a discovery the world will come to our country to collect.

(CONTINUED)

MR. OPABUMI

Look around. No indigenous weapons technology, no indigenous medical breakthroughs, no workable political ideas, nothing. No one cares about your stupid scientific discovery.

(Then)

The window of opportunity is still open. Join me now and let us make as much as we can.

AKACHUKWU

No.

MR. OPABUMI

Then you leave me no choice.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The classroom is empty. Stephen sits in the back. He is reading a book. More like scanning through the book.

Akachukwu enters and walks up to him.

STEPHEN

So... what did he want?

Akachukwu's face is mortified.

AKACHUKWU

We have a bigger problem.

Stephen stands as we start to PULL OUT from them through the window. Akachukwu's lips are moving. We don't hear him but we see Stephen's reaction.

He slams the book on the floor.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Opabumi sits in his chair doing all he can to appear calm. Stephen is standing. He is angry.

STEPHEN

I paid you. I paid you what you requested but it wasn't enough for you.

(CONTINUED)

MR. OPABUMI

I don't know what you are talking about.

He rings a bell on his table.

STEPHEN

Akachukwu told me everything. You wanted my work for yourself. You are a selfish, greedy, stupid old fool.

MR. OPABUMI

Watch what you say to me boy.

STEPHEN

I'm not sharing my work with anybody.

MR. OPABUMI

Your work? We will find out whose work it is soon.

2 young men enters.

MR. OPABUMI (CONTD)

Remove this boy from my office.

Stephen infuriated, makes for Mr. Opabumi but the 2 young men holds him back. They carry him out of the office.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

The 2 men throw Stephen out. He lands hard on the ground. A little wounded. He groans in pain. The 2 young men goes back inside.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY

Stephen sits. Akachukwu enters and he stands quickly.

AKACHUKWU

What are you doing here?

STEPHEN

Sir we have to do something. We can't allow him to take what is ours.

Akachukwu goes over to his table and shuffles papers.

(CONTINUED)

AKACHUKWU

I know.

STEPHEN

This man is stealing from us. We have to go to the police.

Akachukwu stops.

AKACHUKWU

The police? Well, good luck with them.

He resumes what he is doing.

STEPHEN

What do you mean?

Akachukwu stops again.

AKACHUKWU

We have no proof that what he has is yours.

STEPHEN

We have the proposal.

AKACHUKWU

The proposal is nothing. It proves nothing.

STEPHEN

What do we do?

AKACHUKWU

I don't know.

Pause. Beat.

STEPHEN

What will he do with details of the research?

AKACHUKWU

He is with the union. My best guess is he will publish the findings and attract European scientists. They will pay him a lot to keep working on that.

STEPHEN

Christ.

AKACHUKWU
I'm sorry Stephen.

Akachukwu walks out.

EXT. BOOKSHOP - EVENING

Juliet is locking up the shop for the day. Stephen walks up to her.

JULIET
Hey.

STEPHEN
Hey.

JULIET
How is it going?

STEPHEN
Not very well. I will walk you home.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Stephen and Juliet walk side by side. Stephen has just filled her in on the recent invents.

STEPHEN
It is like he is taking my most priced possession and i can't even do anything.

Juliet is not saying anything. They take a few steps. Then...

JULIET
The answer is in you.

STEPHEN
What?

JULIET
Look into your inner self. You will find the answer.

EXT. STEPHEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Stephen sits. Hands under his jaw. Thinking.

EXT. STREET/AMSLN BUILDING - DAY

Stephen crosses the street and heads to the building.

INT. AMSLN BUILDING - DAY

Stephen walks up to the secretary.

STEPHEN

Please, I am here to see the
chairman.

SECRETARY

Do you have an appointment?

STEPHEN

No.

SECRETARY

If you are here for the industrial
training programme, I'm sorry we
are not taking students now..

STEPHEN

No.

SECRETARY

Are you from the dry cleaners?

STEPHEN

Uh... Yes.

SECRETARY

Thank God. What took you so long?
Anyways the clothes are over there.

She points to a corner.

STEPHEN

I was... hoping to speak with him
-- the chairman -- about... the
last set of clothes.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Stephen sits across from a man (50's). He is the chairman of ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENTIST OF NIGERIA (AMLSN).

Stephen has told him about the research. Then...

CHAIRMAN

Nonsense. It's your word against his boy. He holds a B.Sc, an M.SC and a doctorate. You? You have nothing.

STEPHEN

I wouldn't know the contents of this research if I'm not the owner.

CHAIRMAN

You could be someone working for him.

STEPHEN

Sir, I know listening to me is unbelievable but this research is all I have. All I am and probably all I will ever be. I have spent everything I have on this. I can't imagine losing it. All I need is an opportunity to prove I own it.

The chairman considers this. Then...

CHAIRMAN

You have one chance.

STEPHEN

Thank you sir. You won't -- I will convince you.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Stephen walks home from school. At a corner, some children are playing. Stephen looks at them. Then he slows down...

The children are standing side by side and are holding hands together. Then they form a circle still holding hands. They sing and dance moving round and round.

Stephen stares for a while. Registering all. Something comes to mind.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - DAY

Stephen hurries in. Looks for the EXERCISE BOOK. Scatters a few things. Finds it. Opens it and searches for something frantically turning pages.

Then he stops...

STEPHEN

This is it. This is what i have
been missing.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A mini conference room. A white board stands in a corner.

Mr. Opabumi and the chairman sit. Another man sits with them. He is the deputy. There are 3 copies of the research on the desk. Mr. Opabumi is here to finalize the review.

CHAIRMAN

We can't tell you how happy we are
to read this. It is very
interesting.

MR. OPABUMI

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN

Some of us are caught up with
politics but it is good to know the
others are still working hard.

They laugh.

MR. OPABUMI

So, we are ready to publish?

CHAIRMAN

Just about.

MR. OPABUMI

What do you mean?

CHAIRMAN

A boy showed up in my office
claiming you stole his work.

MR. OPABUMI

A boy?

(CONTINUED)

CHAIRMAN

He claimed he paid you to do the research in your lab.

MR. OPABUMI

That is a big accusation. I did no such thing.

CHAIRMAN

The boy was very persistent. I decided to give him a chance.

The chairman signals his deputy. The deputy opens the door and lets Stephen in to the office. He has a copy of his research in his hand.

Mr. Opabumi is uncomfortable with this. He adjusts himself in his chair.

CHAIRMAN

Do you know this boy?

Mr. Opabumi looks at Stephen squarely in the face.

MR. OPABUMI

No.

STEPHEN

He is lying.

CHAIRMAN

I'm not here to debate who is lying and who is not.

(To Stephen)

Here is your chance. Convince me.

Stephen stares at Mr. Opabumi angrily.

CHAIRMAN (CONTD)

We don't have all day.

STEPHEN

In... your work, you described another unique class of sugar transporters.

MR. OPABUMI

How do you know the contents of my work?

STEPHEN

Because it is my work.

(CONTINUED)

MR. OPABUMI

(To chairman)

I don't have to sit down and listen to this.

He starts to stand.

STEPHEN

I left out a very vital information and you didn't notice it.

Mr. Opabumi freezes. Stephen drops the copy he has in front of the chairman. The chairman goes through it as Stephen continues.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

Your work says the transporters are embedded in the lipid bilayer and help in the efflux of sugars and you went on to explain. Everything you said about this transporters are what the world already know in GLUTs and SWEETs and other sugar transporters. You also went a step further to tell the world about the H structure of these new unique transporters. What you failed to mention is how exactly these H transporters transport the sugar molecules.

CHAIRMAN

And how exactly do they do that?

STEPHEN

Good question.

Stephen goes over to the board and draws a big curved H. It looks like a circle except the top and down are open. He demonstrates as he continues.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

These transporters are mainly made up of amino acids but there are 2 very important ones. They are located at the middle which explains the H structure. When the cell receive signals to export sugars, the lower part sort of opens allowing these sugars to bind to these amino acids in the middle. It creates some sort of stability for it. The lower part closes and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN (CONTD) (cont'd)
the upper part opens so the sugar
molecule can go out. These
transporters have the ability to
change their conformation from open
to occluded state or vice versa. In
the next phase of this research we
will be hoping to find out which of
the 20 amino acids are in the
middle. Mine has all this detail.
Yours do not.

We hold for a beat as the information settles in.

EXT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE OFFICE - DAY

Stephen paces. Beat. The office door opens and the chairman
steps out.

CHAIRMAN
We won't publish the work any more.

STEPHEN
Thank God.

CHAIRMAN
From the look of things, it is hard
to know who owns the work and who
is lying.

STEPHEN
But --

CHAIRMAN
It's my final decision. I don't
want anymore trouble. Go home.

The chairman walks away.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY

Akachukwu stands looking at Stephen who is looking back at
him. Stephen has told him all that happened.

AKACHUKWU
I could have done more to help. I
should have done more.

STEPHEN
It's all in the past now.
(Beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN (cont'd)
What now sir?

AKACHUKWU
We move up the ladder.

INT. VICE CHANCELLOR OFFICE - DAY

The office is very spacious. The Vice Chancellor sits in his chair. His desk is twice the size of Akachukwu's desk.

Stephen and Akachukwu sits across from him. Akachukwu is talking as the vice chancellor goes through their proposal.

AKACHUKWU
Sir, the two stages of the
experiment has been completed with
success. If you had looked closely
--

The vice chancellor holds up his hand.

VICE CHANCELLOR
What do you want?

AKACHUKWU
Recommendation and support.

The Vice Chancellor looks away and laughs loudly.

VICE CHANCELLOR
Mr...

AKACHUKWU
Onyia, sir.

VICE CHANCELLOR
Mr. Onyia, are you aware we are
been owed 8 months salary?

AKACHUKWU
Yes sir.

VICE CHANCELLOR
The language we speak around here
is money not... science
experiments.

STEPHEN
What we have in that proposal is
huge. It could be the answer to
unanswered questions in science.

(CONTINUED)

VICE CHANCELLOR

What the both of you are doing is good and i commend you on that. Keep doing it the way you have been doing it and one day, you will be rewarded.

He drops the proposal on the desk and picks the receiver of the intercom. He presses a button. Akachukwu and Stephen exchange glances.

VICE CHANCELLOR

Kate, who else wants to see me?

(Pause)

Okay, send her in.

He replaces the receiver and picks another file on his desk.

AKACHUKWU

Sir, at least consider it and put it in your agenda.

VICE CHANCELLOR

I have one agenda and that is hassling whoever signs my paycheck to sign my paycheck. Unless you have an idea on that, we are done here.

Akachukwu and Stephen leaves. Disappointed.

EXT. UNIVERSITY COMPOUND - DAY

Stephen and Juliet sit.

STEPHEN

It is as if they are not seeing the big picture.

JULIET

It doesn't seem as if. They are not seeing it.

STEPHEN

My brain is supposed to be worth millions by now.

JULIET

Don't worry. Your awesome brain will not go to waste. It's only a matter of time.

They look at each other.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

I thought maybe the V.C is different.

(Beat)

This is the end of the road for me.

JULIET

Stephen stop.

(Hesitates)

I will talk to my mom.

STEPHEN

Your mom?

JULIET

She knows someone who knows a friend to the secretary of the commissioner for education. Maybe, they will be interested.

Stephen ought to be excited but he is not.

STEPHEN

Why are you doing this? You don't even know if it's all a big lie.

JULIET

I don't know science but i know that whatever is important to you is important to me.

They both hold their gaze.

PATRICK (V.O)

The other white boys called. They need your opinion on something.

INT. V.I.A STATION - STUDIO - DAY

Stephen is standing with Patrick. The host is sitting. It's another break.

STEPHEN

What did you tell them?

PATRICK

That you will be there on Friday.

STEPHEN

You should have told them some time next week.

(CONTINUED)

PATRICK
Time is money Steve.

STEPHEN
Yeah. I hear you.

PATRICK
Your alma mater called.

STEPHEN
Which?

PATRICK
The university. They want to know
if you can squeeze out time to
visit them.

STEPHEN
They are not my alma mater. They
are just face seekers. What else?

PATRICK
That is all for now.

Stephen walks over to his seat on the stage and sits down.
He brings out a PAPER from his pocket. Something is written
on it. "E41 FANADO ESTATE".

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY

Akachukwu and Stephen sits.

AKACHUKWU
Are you out of your mind?

STEPHEN
My mind has never been more with me
than now.

AKACHUKWU
Commissioner for education's
office? How did you manage that?

STEPHEN
I.M. *Ima Mmađu.*

STEPHEN
I.M. Knowing somebody

AKACHUKWU
We might have a problem. The school
has not approved of what we are
doing. Not even the department.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

We have to go sir. This could be our only chance.

AKACHUKWU

(Hesitates)

Okay.

EXT. BUILDING - TO ESTABLISH

It is a bright sunny day. We are looking at a storey building. The national flag flying high.

ON SCREEN: STATE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A woman is sitting going through the proposal. She is the COMMISSIONER FOR EDUCATION.

Akachukwu and Stephen, in their Sunday best, sit quietly across from her. They are a little tense.

COMMISSIONER

Who recommended you to my office?

Stephen and Akachukwu shares a look.

COMMISSIONER (CONTD)

Who carry you come?

Akachukwu is lost.

STEPHEN

Mrs Matilda Okongwo. Through your secretary.

COMMISSIONER

I remember. She said something about a school boy with big dreams.

STEPHEN

With all due respect ma, what we have in that proposal is something the world have never seen before.

COMMISSIONER

Your school must be thrilled about this.

(CONTINUED)

AKACHUKWU
To be honest with you --

STEPHEN
(Cuts in)
Yes they are very thrilled.

COMMISSIONER
How may I help?

AKACHUKWU
We are here to get assistance for
the research.

The commissioner eyes both of them.

COMMISSIONER
By assistance, you mean funding.
Money.

AKACHUKWU
Yes.

COMMISSIONER
Stop wasting your time.

AKACHUKWU
Sorry?

COMMISSIONER
Do you want the brutal truth or the
gorgeous lie?

AKACHUKWU
Truth.

COMMISSIONER
I will tell you both. The gorgeous
lie is that we will congratulate
you and make you believe we have
passed on your proposal to the
governor. You will wait till next
century and never get a reply. The
brutal truth is that the state
government will toss your proposal
aside without glancing at it.
(Then)
There is no money for research here
but I will be kind enough to write
you a recommendation. You should go
to nationals.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

Stephen and Akachukwu walks out.

AKACHUKWU

At least, our short trip is not in vain.

Stephen is quiet.

AKACHUKWU (CONTD)

You are not saying anything.

STEPHEN

Why does everyone think we are wasting our time? We are not wasting our time, are we?

Akachukwu looks away.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

Sir?

AKACHUKWU

Whatever you do, never doubt yourself.

STEPHEN

Is it that they are not seeing it or they refuse to see it?

AKACHUKWU

Stop looking for trouble where there is none.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - DAY

Stephen enters and drops his bag on the bed. He raises his mattress and brings out the EXERCISE BOOK we now know as his world. He sits on the bed staring into space.

We hold for a beat on him.

UNCLE CLEM (V.O)

Your grandma just told me you will be graduating in a few months.

EXT. STEPHEN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Grandma and uncle Clem are sitting. Stephen stands in front of them.

STEPHEN
Yes uncle.

UNCLE CLEM
Good. Maybe now, she will let me go ahead with my plan.

GRANDMA
Clement, not now.

STEPHEN
Uncle, we are paying money for something very important in school. Faculty dues, departmental-

UNCLE CLEM
How much is everything?

STEPHEN
12,000 naira.

UNCLE CLEM
What?

GRANDMA
It is for school.

UNCLE CLEM
Mama, you are spoiling this boy.

GRANDMA
Stop complaining. Give him the money.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Stephen and Akachukwu are here. They sit quietly.

ON SCREEN: *EDUCATION MINISTRY, ABUJA.*

STEPHEN
This is going to work.

AKACHUKWU
Amen to that.

The door opens and a young man flanked by two policemen in camouflage enters.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG MAN
(Hausa accent)
You must be the people sent by the
commissioner.

AKACHUKWU
Yes. I am Mr. Akachukwu Onyia. This
is Stephen Ekwewe, the brain
behind the research.

Everyone shakes hands.

AKACHUKWU (CONTD)
Will the minister be joining us?

YOUNG MAN
He can't make it. I'm his personal
assistant. You can tell me
anything. You have a minute.

Stephen is not happy with this.

AKACHUKWU
We are here because we are hoping
to get funds for a very important
scientific discovery...

He couldn't finish for the young man burst into laughter. He
turns to the policemen.

YOUNG MAN
(In Hausa)
Stupid people will never seize to
amaze me.

The two policemen join in the laughter.

AKACHUKWU
Did i say something funny?

YOUNG MAN
(In Hausa)
Yes. Scientific discovery.

They burst into laughter some more.

STEPHEN
(In Hausa)
Science is an important aspect of
human life and what we have here is
no joke.

Silence. Everyone stares at Stephen. Akachukwu is the most
shocked.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN (CONTD)
(In Hausa)
All we need is support.

A knock on the door and then a white man enters. This is WALTER PATTERSON (40). Educational attache to the federal government.

WALTER
(To Young man)
What is taking so long?

YOUNG MAN
(To Stephen)
Our hands are full and right now we are not interested in funding any research. I wish you luck in your endeavour. Good day gentlemen.

One of the policemen opens the door. The young man and Walter walks out.

POLICEMAN
Oya, come dey go.

EXT. MOTOR PARK - MORNING

Stephen and Akachukwu board the bus. Not happy.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

They enter and sit down.

AKACHUKWU
You speak Hausa?

STEPHEN
I do.

AKACHUKWU
You are a lot of things.

The bus driver gets in. Starts up and rolls away. Stephen stares out the window.

INT. BIOCHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTAL BUILDING - DAY

Students are clustered on the notice board. Stephen walks by and sees the most recent information pinned there.

It reads "ALL FINAL YEAR STUDENTS ARE TO PAY THEIR SCHOOL FEES ON OR BEFORE 20TH MARCH, 2010. FAILURE TO DO SO, THE STUDENT WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO SEAT FOR HIS/HER FINAL EXAMS. SIGNED H.O.D."

Stephen slowly walks away. A worried look on his face.

INT. STEPHEN'S HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - DAY

Stephen and Juliet are playing the LUDO game.

JULIET

So, how are you preparing for your final exams?

STEPHEN

The same way i prepare for others.

JULIET

I hope you are not one of those that wait till the deadline to pay school fees.

Stephen is quiet. Juliet looks at him.

JULIET (CONTD)

Stephen?

STEPHEN

I don't want to talk about it.

JULIET

What do you mean you don't want to talk about it?

STEPHEN

Leave me alone.

Stephen walks to his room. Juliet will not give up on him. She follows.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stephen walks in. Juliet behind him.

JULIET
Stephen talk to me.

STEPHEN
I have not paid. There, I said it.

JULIET
Why?

STEPHEN
I used the money.

JULIET
You used the money? For what?

STEPHEN
(Hesitates)
To fund the second stage of my
research.

JULIET
I don't get it. Your school fees
alone won't be enough.

STEPHEN
I -- I used part of my trust fund.
Most of it actually.

JULIET
Oh my God. Do you realize the storm
that is about to hit you?

STEPHEN
You don't need to tell me. I know
the possible outcome.

JULIET
You will lose everything. No exams.
No graduation. No trust fund.

GRANDMA (O.S)
No trust fund?

Stephen and Juliet turns. Grandma is at the door way.

GRANDMA (CONTD)
Stephen, what is she talking about?

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN
Grandma, i am sorry.

Grandma enters. Things are about to get emotional or ugly in here. Juliet slips away.

GRANDMA
What did you do with the money?

STEPHEN
I used it for my research.

GRANDMA
When your parents were killed in the north, your uncle brought you back here. People said you are finished and will amount to nothing in life. I forced your uncle to give you education. I always thought it will be your redemption. And your trust fund will get you started. I was wrong. I had high hopes for you. You have disappointed me.

STEPHEN
Grandma...

GRANDMA
And you can't graduate? Your uncle will be --

Right there in that very moment, grandma's heart can't take it any longer. It gives out.

She holds her chest. A heart attack. She falls on the floor. Stephen dashes to her side.

STEPHEN
Grandma... Grandma...

EXT. STEPHEN'S HOUSE - DAY

People are everywhere. Mourning. It's grandma's burial.

Stephen and uncle Clem stands before a grave as 6 youths lowers the casket in to the grave. Someone in the crowd sings a sad song.

Uncle Clem bends. Takes some sand and throws them into the grave. Paying his last respect. He turns and glares at Stephen. Then he walks away.

Stephen cups up a handful of sand. Takes a deep breath and throws it into the grave.

EXT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Stephen steps out. The 2 boys we have seen before, Stephen haters, are talking in low tones. They see Stephen and go over to him.

BOY #1
Student Professor Stephen Ekwewe,
how you dey?

BOY #2
We heard a little bit of a
tittle-tattle.

STEPHEN
What?

BOY #1
We heard you won't write the final
exams.

BOY #2
Not won't. Can't. He can't write
the final exams.

STEPHEN
Who told you that?

BOY #1
It doesn't matter. We just want to
confirm the story.

Stephen attempts to walk away but they quickly stand in his way.

BOY #1 (CONTD)
You made the rest of us feel like
empty vessels and shit. The last
day is fast approaching and when we
are gone, you will still be here.
What a pity.

BOY #2
*Ekwewe ga ekwe na ute
ekwere.*

BOY #2
He who never believes will
believe when it is time to
believe.

They burst into laughter.

(CONTINUED)

AKACHUKWU
What is going on here?

The boys quickly move out of Stephen's way. Stephen walks away.

EXT. UNIVERSITY COMPOUND - DAY

Stephen sits in his usual lonely place. Akachukwu approaches.

AKACHUKWU
I heard your classmates say something. Is it true?

Stephen is quiet.

AKACHUKWU (CONTD)
I'm asking you a question.

STEPHEN
It is my problem.

AKACHUKWU
So it is true. Why can't you write your final exams?

STEPHEN
School fees.

AKACHUKWU
You don't have money or you used the money. Which is it?

Stephen stands.

STEPHEN
You told me to believe in myself and that is exactly what i did.

AKACHUKWU
Don't you dare put the blame on me.

STEPHEN
You told me to stop undermining myself. Like a fool i was, I took what you call... the bold step.

AKACHUKWU
I didn't ask you to use your school fees.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

Thanks to you, I don't have anything now. No degree. No trust fund. I will probably end up a hawker on the streets.

AKACHUKWU

That's not true.

STEPHEN

What else is there for me?.

Silence. Beat.

AKACHUKWU

I can't believe this is happening. You would have made a very good lecturer.

STEPHEN

I don't want to be a teacher! It is beneath me!

AKACHUKWU

I see. Teaching is beneath you? When you end up a bus driver, will it still be beneath you? Or when you become a conductor or hawk pure water or shout at motor parks, will it still be beneath you?

STEPHEN

If you tell me that when you were a student, your dreams were to end up a teacher, I will call you a liar.
(Then)
Just leave me be. It is over for me.

Stephen picks his bag. He walks away.

INT. AKACHUKWU'S OFFICE - DAY

Akachukwu enters. The female lecturer is here. Relieve washes over.

FEMALE LECTURER

Great. I have been trying your number for hours.

(CONTINUED)

AKACHUKWU

What? Why?

FEMALE LECTURER

Prof wants to see you.

INT. PROFESSOR IDAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Akachukwu stands. Professor Idah sits in his chair.

PROFESSOR IDAH

(To Akachukwu)

You know, I'm not surprised. You showed signs of foolishness from the beginning.

AKACHUKWU

I still don't understand what this is about sir.

PROFESSOR IDAH

I specifically gave you orders to stay away from my lab but you wouldn't.

AKACHUKWU

Stephen Ekwewe is a bright and smart student who deserves an opportunity to show what he has.

PROFESSOR IDAH

Well rehearsed. And how is the so called research coming?

Akachukwu is silent. Looks away.

PROFESSOR IDAH (CONTD)

I thought so too. The thing about been a grown up is that you take responsibility for your actions. Your suspension letter is waiting for you at your desk.

Akachukwu calms himself. Willing himself not to cry. He stands. Walks to the door. Stops. Turns.

AKACHUKWU

I did a good thing. I gave a child an opportunity to work on his dreams and you know what? It felt good. That kid has something no one has ever seen in science. All he needs is a little support.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR IDAH

You were a disappointment to this department as a student and now as a teacher. Why don't you try following orders for once. It will do you a lot of good.

(Then)

You might want to check what you say next, your chances of coming back is very slim.

Akachukwu walks away.

INT. STEPHEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Stephen sits on his bed. His face deadpan. His eyes falls on his books at a corner. He goes over to them and picks one, examines it and throws it away.

The madness is on.

He quickly scatters the remaining books. Kicks down his reading chair and desk.

He turns his mattress upside down. He picks the EXERCISE BOOK, looks it over and quickly tears it into pieces.

Then he weeps and screams.

STEPHEN

Why? Why did you have to leave me the way i am? Everyone expected so much from me. My grandma, Uncle Clem, my teachers, everyone at school. Even I... I expected so much from me. Why did you put this brain in me? It is a curse. Do you hear me? You cursed me.

He weeps some more.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

I tried. I believed in myself. I believed you will help me. I did my part but you didn't do yours. Do you hear me? You didn't do yours. I am wasted. It is finished.

Stephen slides to the floor and CRIES.

EXT. UNIVERSITY COMPOUND - DAY

Graduating students fill the compound. They are taking pictures and smiling. Everyone seems happy except...

Stephen, who we spot at a corner watching them. An ice cream cart beside him. He looks on.

Then we spot someone in the middle of the crowd. A boy on graduation gown standing there looking directly at us. Other Students pass frame but not touching the boy.

It is Stephen and he is day dreaming. Imagining himself in graduation gown.

He shakes himself out of his dreams, pushes the cart and walks away.

Just in that moment, a man on suit appears on the same spot, in the crowd, looking around. He appears to be looking for someone.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Stephen pushes his cart and sells his merchandise.

EXT. STEPHEN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Stephen pushes his ice cream cart in. Sees Akachukwu sitting on the steps. Stephen rests his cart at a corner in the compound. Goes over to Akachukwu.

STEPHEN

How did you find me?

AKACHUKWU

I found out you are from this town.
The rest was easy.

STEPHEN

I won't apologize.

AKACHUKWU

I know.

STEPHEN

Then what are you doing here?

AKACHUKWU

Someone showed up on graduation day
looking for you. He is interested

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AKACHUKWU (cont'd)
in your work. He wants to meet with
you.

STEPHEN
That part of my life is history
now.

Stephen makes to go in.

AKACHUKWU
I used to have a dream. I used to
be you. In my final year, I
published my thesis on pain. I got
a scholarship to study in Canada. A
night before I travel, I partied
hard. I was wasted and hung over
for the next 2 days. I lost my
scholarship. My mates told my story
and the worst is that they laughed
at how I ended up. If someone had
offered me an opportunity to change
that, I would have taken it. Trust
me, you don't want to live the rest
of your life this way.

Akachukwu brings out a card and gives it to Stephen.

AKACHUKWU (CONTD)
Go to that hotel by 3 pm tomorrow.

STEPHEN
And do what?

AKACHUKWU
And listen to what the guy has to
say.

Akachukwu walks away. Stephen stands there looking at him.

INT. BOOKSHOP - DAY

Stephen sits. Juliet is going through a pile of books on the
table

STEPHEN
I don't know what to expect when i
get there.

JULIET
It might be something good.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

I don't even know who I'm meeting.

Juliet walks over and sits beside him.

JULIET

You should go and find out.

STEPHEN

Why is everyone telling me to go?

JULIET

If everyone is telling you to go,
perhaps, you should listen.

Stephen looks away. Beat.

JULIET (CONTD)

Stephen, listen. When opportunity
comes knocking and you see it and
refuse to grab it, then that is
stupid and stupid is what you are
not.

She raises her small finger.

JULIET (CONTD)

Promise me you will go and come
back to tell me all the gory
details.

Stephen raises his and they interlock their small fingers.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Stephen pushes his cart into the compound and heads to a
building with the sign RECEPTION.

INT. HOTEL - RECEPTION - DAY

Stephen enters and walks up to the receptionist.

STEPHEN

Hi. I am here to meet with someone.
One Walter Patterson.

RECEPTIONIST

You are Stephen Ekwewe?

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

Yes.

RECEPTIONIST

Please have a seat. He will join you shortly.

Stephen sits down. A waiter brings a bottle of wine over to him. The wine looks expensive.

STEPHEN

I didn't order for anything?

WAITER

It has been paid for.

The waiter pours the wine.

WAITER (CONTD)

Anything to eat sir?

STEPHEN

No. Thank you.

The waiter keeps the bottle and moves away. Stephen sips the wine. His eyes falls on a wall clock.

TIME: 03:12 PM.

INT. HOTEL - RECEPTION - SAME

TIME: 03:50 PM.

Stephen sips the wine. Walter enters the reception. Stands for a while and watches Stephen. Then he makes his way to him.

WALTER

Stephen Ekwewe?

STEPHEN

Yes.

They shake hands.

WALTER

I am Walter Patterson, educational attache to the government. I don't think me have met.

They sit.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN
Educational attache?

WALTER
Let's just say my country helps
your country on education matters
and I'm just the guy who pass the
massage.

STEPHEN
Hm...

WALTER
What do you mean "Hm"?

STEPHEN
If you ask me I will say your
attache story is just a front.

WALTER
I suppose you know your country
more than I do. I will just get
right to the point. I read your
proposal. Very exciting i will say.

STEPHEN
And?

WALTER
You need funds and we can provide
the funds and facilities and
everything you need.

Stephen looks him in the eye.

STEPHEN
What's the catch?

WALTER
You will come work for us.

STEPHEN
Us?

WALTER
We are a research institute based
in the U.S. We offer scholarships
to bright students all over the
world. Your theories are
exceptional. We will be delighted
to work with you.

Stephen ought to be excited but he is not.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

No, thanks.

Walter smiles. Leans forward.

WALTER

You think they care? They don't.

Stephen looks away.

WALTER (CONTD)

You didn't finish school but you are very smart. Perhaps, the smartest in your generation. Here is a chance to show those people that discarded you without second thought the huge mistake they made. A chance to write your name in the history books. A chance to show the world what you have in that head of yours and i believe there is a noble prize in there.

(Beat)

Don't allow all that to waste away.

Stephen bites his lower lip. This is the first time we are seeing him do that. He is on the verge of making a major decision in his life.

STEPHEN

I will like sometime to think about it.

WALTER

I'm afraid we've got no time. I will be leaving for Abuja in two hours and by next week, i will be in the U.S.

STEPHEN

This is sudden. I don't know what to say.

WALTER

I know but we really need you Stephen. If you show up in 2 hours, i will make a phone call. If you don't...

He shrugs.

EXT. HOTEL - 2 HOURS LATER

Walter's driver loads his bags in the boot of a car. Walter is standing, smoking and looking out for Stephen. The driver closes the boot. Walter puts out the cigarette. The driver enters.

Walter is about to enter when out of the corner of his eye, Stephen appears from the gate carrying a bag. Walter sighs in relieve and pulls out his cell phone. He presses a button.

VOICE ON PHONE

(Female)

U.S embassy Abuja, Nigeria. How may we help you?

WALTER

This is Walter Patterson. Put me through to David Smith.

VOICE ON PHONE

Please hold.

Stephen reaches the car.

WALTER

(To Stephen)

I'm glad you could make it.

They enter the car.

INT. MOVING CAR - DAY

As the driver pulls away...

WALTER

(Into phone)

Hi David, I need you to do something for me. It is very urgent...

(So on)

As Walter continues to speak on the phone, his voice drowns out and we stay with Stephen who is looking out the window.

STEPHEN'S POV: They pass hawkers, bus conductors, barrow pushers, Keke drivers e.t.c.

INT. V.I.A STATION - STUDIO - DAY

Stephen is staring into space lost in thought.

HOST
(Quietly)
Stephen... Stephen...

Stephen shakes himself out of his trance.

STEPHEN
Sorry... sorry.

HOST
That was an emotional story.

STEPHEN
I could have lost everything. I could have been that guy who brings coffee to you every morning or that taxi driver at the road side or the Keke or okada rider. I could have been that guy who makes the headline news for committing suicide.

HOST
But you made the headlines for all the right reasons.

STEPHEN
You don't get it, do you? How many more Stephens are out on the streets just because no one listens to them? Many don't make it to school just because of the poverty stricken country. A lot of youths are wasting away because they do whatever they do to survive.

HOST
The jobless ones are lazy and should try to create jobs for themselves.

STEPHEN
Have you tried it?

HOST
Tried what?

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN

Been creative in a country like ours.

Silence.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

The ones that often tell you to be creative are the ones who have never tried it themselves. You should try it sometime. Then come back and we will talk.

HOST

Achebe wrote "Things fall apart" as a young man. The jobless youths should explore areas they are good at.

STEPHEN

You want to talk about Achebe? The point people forget is Achebe was already working with the Nigerian Broadcasting corporation when he wrote his book. The manuscript was typed and arranged in London. How could he achieve that if he had no job and money in his pocket?

The host clears her throat. Clearly she has no answer to that.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

I'm just an example. A lesson to everyone. Though my help came, it did not come from within. It came from outside.

The host knew she has lost this battle. Perhaps, a change of topic might suffice.

HOST

So tell me, what happened to Akachukwu?

STEPHEN

I had them reward him with something good in Canada.

HOST

And Juliet?

Stephen is quiet. He looks away.

(CONTINUED)

Then he looks at the host and at the camera. In that moment, he takes a decision. He walks off stage while still on air and goes over to Patrick.

STEPHEN
Give me the car keys.

PATRICK
What?

STEPHEN
Give me the car keys now!

Everyone is watching. Surprised. Patrick gives him the keys. He storms out. Patrick follows.

EXT. V.I.A STATION - DAY

Stephen walks to the car. Patrick at his heels.

PATRICK
Stephen, where are you off to? You can't go driving out all by yourself in the middle of your interview. This is bad. So... so bad.

Stephen reaches the car and opens the door.

PATRICK (CONTD)
At least let me come with you.

STEPHEN
No. I have to do this alone.

Stephen enters and drives away.

INT. MOVING CAR - DAY

Stephen is driving. Sees a jewelry store. He drives over. Parks.

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Stephen enters and walks up to the store owner.

STEPHEN
I want a ring. Something simple.

(CONTINUED)

STORE OWNER
Size?

STEPHEN
I don't know.

STORE OWNER
Body size?

STEPHEN
Eh... I'm not sure.

STORE OWNER
You should find out.

STEPHEN
Just show me what you have.

The store owner takes out a casing that contains about 15 rings of different sizes. She shows them to Stephen. He looks at them. Can't make a decision.

EXT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Stephen walks out of the store. The casing with all the rings in is hand. He quickly enters his car.

INT. MOVING CAR - DAY

Stephen drives. The ring casing in the front passenger seat. He pulls over at a house.

EXT. STREET/HOUSE - DAY

Stephen exits the car and pushes the gate open. The ring casing in his hand. He walks into the compound.

For a little while, we stay with a number written on the outer side of the fence. "E41".

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Stephen knocks on the door. No answer. He knocks again.

VOICE (O.S)
Coming...

The door opens and standing right there is JULIET. She is more matured now but still very pretty.

They stare at each other for a while. Then she does the most bizarre thing. She leaves the door open and walks back into the house. Stephen hesitates. Enters.

INT. SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stephen walks in. She is not there. He hears noise in the kitchen. He goes over.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He enters. She is preparing food.

STEPHEN
Juliet, please say something.

She stops and looks at him.

JULIET
You look tortured.

STEPHEN
I am.

Silence. They both stare at each other.

JULIET
What is torturing you?

STEPHEN
Not contacting you all this time.

JULIET
After 8 years, you couldn't do it yourself. Your manager had to do it for you.

STEPHEN
I'm sorry.

JULIET
How do you forget your best friend for that long?

STEPHEN
I never forgot you. I kept track of your activities. You just didn't know.

(CONTINUED)

JULIET

(Voice breaking)

Smart Stephen. Genius. You think you can come in here, say you are sorry. Say a few things only... Stephen Ekwekwe can say and expect redemption?

(Gestures to the ring casing)

Maybe you think a gift will do the trick?

STEPHEN

I was depressed for a long time. I threw myself into my work and forgot what it is like to laugh. Only one person made me laugh and i have come for that person.

A tear escapes her eye. Stephen opens the casing displaying all the rings of different sizes. Juliet looks at them.

JULIET

What is the meaning of this?

STEPHEN

Marry me.

JULIET

What!

STEPHEN

Leaving you the first time was a mistake.

JULIET

Stephen, people propose with one ring not... what, a dozen?

STEPHEN

Actually i don't know how many they are. I didn't know your size so i had to bring all.

Juliet comes closer and looks at them.

JULIET

They are beautiful.

STEPHEN

Just like you.

She tries one. It didn't fit. She tries another. It didn't fit. Stephen removes one.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHEN (CONTD)

Try this.

She puts it on and it fits perfectly. He drops the rest of the rings on the kitchen counter.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

Is that a yes?

Juliet nods and Stephen hugs her.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

Thank you Julie. You will never regret this.

They kiss slowly and passionately. They step back.

STEPHEN (CONTD)

Go change. We are going out.

JULIET

Now?

STEPHEN

Yes.

Juliet happily goes to her room to change. Stephen walks back to the sitting room.

INT. SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As he walks around looking and touching things, we hear him in V.O.

STEPHEN (V.O)

I deserve this. I deserve to be happy. Now, i can make a family.

There is a LOUD CRASH somewhere in the house.

STEPHEN

Juliet!

INT. ROOM - DAY

The contents of the bedside table are scattered on the floor...

Lying down there is JULIET. Her mouth full of white foamy substance. Her whole body shaking rapidly.

(CONTINUED)

Her epileptic episode choose the worst time in the world to show up. Stephen dashes to her side.

STEPHEN
Juliet! Juliet! No! no!

BLACK

The simple words "2 MONTHS LATER" appears and slowly goes away.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Stephen is lying on the bed. His bears are bigger now. Unkempt.

Patrick is somewhere in the room. He is on the phone with someone.

PATRICK
Yes. No. Yes. Forget what the news said. He is alive. He lost someone very dear to him.
(Listens for a while)
We Africans are superstitious people. In our place, we mourn for 3 months.
(Pause)
I assure you, he will get to work immediately after his mourning.
Yes. Thank you.

He ends the call and turns to Stephen.

PATRICK (CONTD)
Steve, you have to get yourself together. I don't know how long i can keep them away.

STEPHEN
I know.
(Beat)
I'm ready.

PATRICK
Good. I will make the arrangements.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

A car is driving out. We notice the hotel is the same as the one Stephen met Walter Patterson and the car is driving out in the same fashion...

INT. MOVING CAR - DAY

Someone is driving. Stephen and Patrick are in the back. Stephen is looking out the window in the same fashion as the first time.

STEPHEN'S P.O.V: They pass ice cream sellers, barrow pushers, okada riders, keke drivers etc.

BACK TO SCENE

This time, he relaxes in his seat.

STEPHEN (V.O)

Me and my work, that's all there is now. Where I work, there are 14 Nigerians. There are others who work in other companies in the state I live. There are others in other companies in the other 50 states. There are others scattered all over the world. Then there are other Africans.

CAPTION:

EVERY YEAR, AFRICA'S BRIGHTEST MOVE TO AMERICA, EUROPE AND ASIA AND CONTRIBUTE IN MAKING THEIR LIVES BETTER.

IF THESE PEOPLE WERE GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES BACK HOME AND THEY WORK WITH THE SAME FACILITIES, WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN?

EXT. STREET - DAY

The car keeps moving until it disappears from our sight.

FADE OUT...

...THE END...