

# Destroyers

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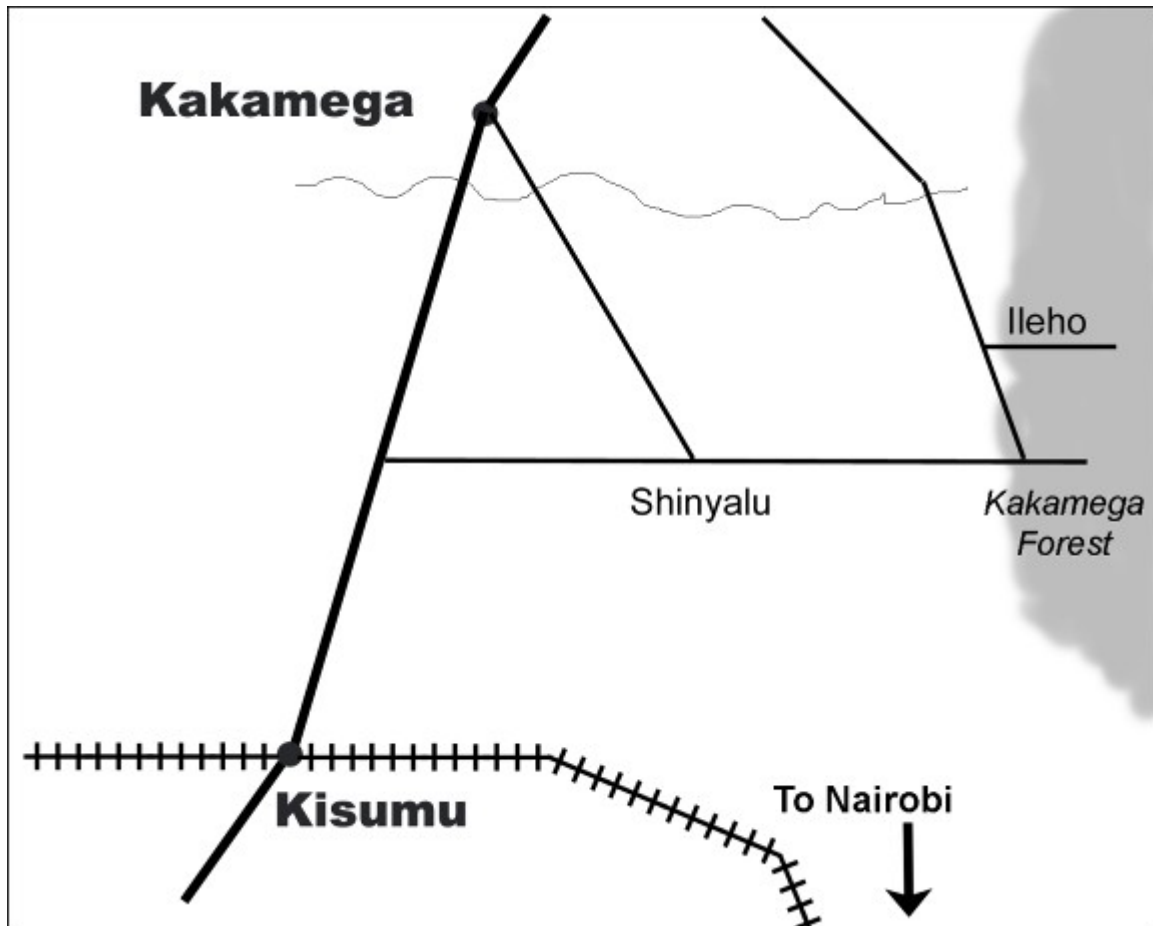
## **Introduction. Shinyalu**

Shinyalu was not so different from any one of a thousand other villages in Western Kenya. It was a collection of small shops (mostly butchers with chopping blocks for counters and fly-covered meat hanging beside the blocks) and open-air stalls selling produce, used clothing, pots, tools, and hand-made goods out of handcarts or just from tarps spread on the ground. The village had a post office, general store, hardware shop, kinyosi\*, and numerous cafes which served up generous portions of ugali\*, beans, and sukuma wiki\*. On market days Shinyalu would attract a thousand or more shoppers, coming to sell their livestock and/or to stock up on essentials.

Shinyalu was situated at the T-junction of two dirt roads, one going south to the Kakamega Forest (and north to the paved road that leads west to Kisumu, on the shores of Lake Victoria); and the other going northeast to Kaka-mega, where locals could get most of their "luxury" items: furniture, windows, anything electrical, and exotic foods like pineapples, potatoes, or chocolate.

Smack in the middle of the T-junction there were always matatus\* and at least half a dozen boda-boda\* drivers parked, waiting for business. Vehicles actually negotiating the road would simply drive around them, being careful not to move too close to the edges, where the camber was so steep that they were constantly in danger of slipping into deep rainwater drains that extended down both sides of the road.

(\*[Swahili definitions appear in a list on here.](#).)



Roads like these linked villages throughout the interior. In the dry season they were a series of rock-hard ruts and pot holes, that threatened the suspensions of anything that dared to travel on them. In the wet, they turned into slippery ooze that regularly sucked vehicles into the drains, where driver and passengers would be forced to wait for sufficient volunteers to drag them out, using strong ropes wrapped around the nearest tree.

A hundred metres east of the markets, on the road to Kakamega, lived Amy Walker. Amy was a thin, softly spoken, unmarried Australian Aborigine, in her late fifties. Amy had a twitch in her left eye, which had led to her being called Winky by those who knew her well. She had been raised by a European family in North Queensland, but fifteen years earlier she had become convinced that she should go and live with her "people". Amy believed that the Australian Aborigines had, centuries ago, migrated there from Kenya, and that the way to find her spiritual roots would be to return to Africa. Here in this remote corner of Kenya, she had learned to speak fluent Swahili, as well as Luhya, the more popular local dialect. Over the years, people in the village had ceased to think of her as an Australian, and had come to accept her as one of their own. One by one, she took in selected orphans, until she had nine additions to her household.

An independent Pentecostal church in Queensland had sponsored Amy at the start, but two years after she left Australia, she had a falling out with them

over religious differences. Amy had been forced to find support from other sources ever since. Although she had been granted Kenyan citizenship, the local government offered her no help with finances. Nevertheless, circumstances and her own doggedness had led Amy to enough individual supporters over the years to provide her with a dilapidated van and a four-room brick building to house her and the children who lived with her.

The house had no running water or electricity, but it and the van were considered luxuries by her less fortunate neighbours. Locals often used those luxuries to argue that Amy owed it to them to take on more of the workload in caring for hundreds of orphans in the area.

"You can only scratch as far as your arm can reach," she would reply, quoting a local proverb. "If I try to do too much, we all lose."

Nevertheless, she was often pressed into assisting in other ways, as readers will soon see.

The most notable thing about Shinyalu, about Amy, and about all of the people living in Shinyalu, was just how typically unnotable they were. There are thousands of similar villages throughout the world, all populated by the poorer half of the planet's citizens. People in them live and die without anyone from the major metropolises ever knowing a thing about them. Entire villages could be wiped out, through disease, famine, civil war, natural disasters, or political genocide, and the rest of the globethose who think they know what is really happening in the world today might never even hear of it.

But this is the story of one singularly unnotable bodaboda driver, from that one unnotable village, who came to be part of events that shaped the world.

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### **Chapter 1. Trouble**

"Please, Madam, I have a trouble... please."

It was very late on a Friday night in January. An unseasonal light rain was falling. Amy Walker had sent Benjamin to the door in response to a weak knock.

"Open it, Benjie," she said when Benjamin hesitated at opening to a stranger so late at night. Amy was fully occupied holding Karla, the youngest of nine orphans who lived with her. Benjie, at 18, was the oldest, and he had awakened her when the baby started vomiting.

Light from the lantern on the floor was visible from the road. It was the only light still showing on that side of the village.

"Wah! What happened?" Benjie exclaimed in shock as he opened the door.

The young boy slumped into Benjie's arms before he could answer.

"Winky, it's Moses Chikati! He's bleeding! Real bad!" Benjie struggled to hold the boy up and deal with the blood at the same time. Moses Chikati, the 14-year-old son of a local butcher, had been tightly holding his right bicep prior to the collapse, but when he let go, blood poured from below the elbow of his badly cut forearm.

Amy laid Karla on the floor and rushed to Benjie's aid. What she saw would have been too much for most people, but not her. The lad's forearm had been badly broken, just below the elbow. It had been sliced halfway through, causing it to dangle as though separated. Fortunately the main arteries did not appear to have been severed.

"Lay him here, and wake Anna, ay," Amy told Benjie. At 16, Anna was the second oldest of the orphans.

Amy elevated the injured arm, to minimise blood flow, and squeezed hard just above his elbow. It took both her hands to do it, one encircling the skinny bicep, and the other struggling to keep the half-severed piece in line with the rest of the arm.

When Benjie returned with Anna, they used an old rag to make a tourniquet, which Amy applied, before resting the entire arm on the boy's stomach and carrying him to Amy's old Hi-Ace. Benjie climbed in first and then helped pull Moses in after him. He had to kneel over the lanky body that lay in the aisle between the seats.

Anna stayed to clean up the blood and care for the children, while Amy and Benjie headed for the hospital. Amy had thought of taking Karla too, but knew it was just a matter of time before the baby's fever would break, and this was far more urgent.

In the wet, slippery conditions, she had to struggle to keep the vehicle from sliding off either side of the road on the ten kilometre trip to Kakamega. They reached the hospital in half an hour, a good time in the wet, especially at night.

Moses was still breathing, but his heartbeat was weak as they carried him into the hospital. The night nurse called for the doctor, and Amy, who was type O, donated blood, which was given to him while they waited. When the medico arrived, he assured her that Moses would be fine. Amy and Benjie then left for the journey home.

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## **Chapter 2. Assistance**

The next morning the village of Shinyalu was abuzz with what had happened overnight. Fred Chikati, a local butcher, had attacked his wife with a meat cleaver in a drunken rage, and brutally killed her. Moses had been injured while trying to protect his mother, and had fled in the direction of Winky Walker's house, probably because it was the only one with a light on at that hour. His younger sister, Rosy, though uninjured, had been found cowering in a corner in shock, when neighbours went to investigate the screams.

The police had come to Amy's door shortly after she and Benjie returned from the hospital. They were, of course, looking for information, but Amy was little help, apart from telling them where she had taken Moses, and what his condition was. The sun was just coming up when the police left.

Later that morning, Fred was found sleeping in a nearby maize field and the police dragged him off to the local lock-up, where a stiff beating gave them all the information they would need to lock him away for the rest of his life.

That same afternoon, Fred Chikati's brother, George, came by with young Rosy. He wanted Amy to take the two youngsters in as orphans.

"They ain't orphans," Amy whispered angrily, hoping that Rosy would not understand if she used English. "They're your family; you take them." All of the kids staying with her had lost both parents to AIDS, and none of them had any other living relatives. She had refused to help literally hundreds of other orphans in the area because they did not match those criteria. Locals knew her rules, and most respected it; but George did not let that deter him.

"We'll not take them," he said. "They're cursed, Madam. A bad spirit will come on us if we help them."

"Don't be stupid," said Amy. "A bad spirit will come on you if you don't help them. They're your kin."

Her words had little effect. When George returned to the markets he left Rosy on the road in front of Amy's house, with a strong warning for her not to follow him.

"C'mon in, girl," Amy said to Rosy when George was gone. Rosy was 11, two and a half years younger than Moses, who had turned fourteen just before Christmas. Both children were big for their age.

Rosy was not talking. But she laughed.. a strangely happy laugh. She used it (and a word or two here and there) to respond to Amy's questions. For all Amy knew, this was how she always communicated.

Amy was able to get information out of Rosy just by asking the right questions and by watching how she laughed in response. Through this, she learned that Rosy was afraid to return to the butcher shop; and through her own children she learned that the family had a small shamba nearby, with a mud hut on it. Their father had only been renting the butcher shop, and so it would no longer be available to the children now that he was in jail.

Rosy stayed at Amy's overnight, and the next day, Sunday, Amy took her out to the shamba, along with Lucy and the twins. Lucy was seven, and Jane and Gene were nine. The land was in the process of being prepared for planting, and the hut looked like it had been used from time to time.

"Do you sleep here?" Amy asked.

Rosy laughed in a way that expressed embarrassment, and she shook her head vigorously.

"Did Moses stay here?"

Same reaction.

"So who stayed here?"

She raised her eyebrows, laughed again, then screwed her face up in disgust. "Bad lady," was all she said.

Whoever it was, Rosy obviously did not approve.

From the hut Rosy picked up a jembe, a short handled heavy hoe, and she proceeded to drop it forcefully into thick grass that had grown around the edges of the tiny block, and then to lever the grass out before turning each piece of sod

upside-down to die. Soon she had enticed Gene into using the hoe, while she checked on a few other things. As Amy looked on, he got the feeling that it had been Rosy's job to farm the tiny plot.

Amy also worked out from a few gestures and words that a larger, neighbouring block belonged to the children's uncharitable uncle, George Chikati.

Kenyan parents divide their land up between their sons. With each new generation, the plots become smaller. Some sons sell out to their brothers, then move to cities like Nairobi and Mombasa; but for those who stay, just surviving on what they can grow on an acre, then half an acre, and then a quarter of an acre becomes more and more impossible with each new generation. No doubt the uncle wanted to see the children disposed of, so that he could claim back his brother's share of the family plot.

On Monday, when most of the children were off at school, Amy decided to leave Benjie in charge and take another trip to the hospital in Kakamega to check on Moses. Rosy came with her.

When they were in the hallway, before entering Moses' ward, Amy detected a hurried movement in the boy's bed about the same time that the nurse cleared them to enter the room.

Moses had a big grin on his face. Rosy ran over to him and leaned her head on his left shoulder, both to comfort him and to comfort herself at the same time.

"Me, I got a surprise, Madam," Moses said, looking over Rosy's head at Amy. "Watch this, Rosy," he added, and then, with a flourish, he pulled his right arm out from under the sheet.

Amy was shocked to see that the boy's arm had been cut off, below the elbow. Moses was displaying a heavily bandaged stump. And he was treating it like a joke! His resilience was amazing; but Amy was furious.

"Wait here," was all she could say as she turned to race back out of the room.

"What have they done to him? What have they done?" she whispered to the duty nurse in something close to a shout. "They didn't need to do that."

"Madam, you need to talk to the doctor about that. We don't have specialists here for putting pins and wires in; so he just took. That was better for him."

"Easier maybe, but not better," Amy said in disgust, as she turned to walk back into the room. The boy's life could be ruined just because of their indifference!

Moses was busy talking to Rosy, who was still only responding with laughs and giggles. It was hard to believe they had just lost both of their parents and one arm.

"You must not go with her. We will lose the land," Moses was explaining in Luhya.

"Sawa," Rosy managed to say in response, before adding her signature giggle, to show support for her brother's logic.

"Thank you, Madam, for helping me," Moses said to Amy in English, when he saw her approaching the bed. "Me, I think I woulda been gone they said that if you did not assist, I would be over the mountain and gone."

Amy was witnessing what she would come to see as trademarks of the young boy. One was his command of language. He could have easily spoken to her in Luhya, but he enjoyed using English, and he would often use it in the strangest ways.. not because he lacked vocabulary, but rather because he had more vocabulary than he knew what to do with.

The other trademark was his spontaneous good nature... an ability to stay positive in the face of any adversity. These were qualities that were destined to take him to the top of the world.

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## **Chapter 3. A Loan**

"Madam, we got a trouble again. Please, can you give some help?" It was early Friday morning and Moses was back at Amy's door with Rosy at his side. He had been out of hospital two days, and, with his sister, had moved into the mud hut on their land, 400 metres down the road from where Amy lived. Their mother's body had been buried on her family's property the day before, because Fred had never paid a dowry. It made matters worse for the children, who were now more or less illegitimate.

"Show her, Rosy," he said, and Rosy turned to the side while lifting her blouse to show two round burn marks on her lower back. Amy bent down to get a closer look, and reached out to gingerly touch one of the burns. Rosy drew back in pain, but still managed a laugh.

"How did this happen?" Amy asked, although she knew without asking.

"He wants the land, madam, pure and easy. He put cigarettes on her back. Even he will do it again if we sleep there. Last night we laid in a shamba down the road. But we need the land, Madam!"

Rosy lowered her blouse and looked up at Amy with eyes that spoke sadness, but a mouth that still smiled.

"One second and I'll come with you," Amy said. Her children had just sat down to breakfast in the crowded living room, and so Benjie was put in charge.

On the walk out to the property, Amy asked Moses how his arm was.

"It hurts where it isn't," he said in English. "Me, I can't comfort it now... because it's not there."

Rosy skipped ahead and turned to take a swing at Moses' phantom right hand. He instinctively pulled back and she laughed.

"You know English too!" Amy remarked. She had assumed that Rosy's shyness meant she was not as smart as Moses.

To reach Moses' land, the trio needed to walk down a narrow path that passed through his uncle's land. George saw them coming and was waiting.

"They are not wanted here," he said to Amy. "They will bring trouble to my family. The curse is on them."



"And the D.O. will be on to you," said Amy. She hated to use her friendship with the District Officer as a threat, because she knew that anyone with more wealth than herself might be able to make a similar threat to her if they chose to.

"I have other friends," warned George; but Amy knew he did not have any powerful enough to sway the D.O.

"And I have the burns that you gave to Rosy," Amy warned. "If you lay one more finger on her, I'll have you taken in and dealt with. True!"

Being "dealt with" was a guaranteed twenty lashes from a whip, standard interrogation in those parts; but it could also mean languishing in a cell for months, or even years, just waiting to be heard in court. Amy wasn't sure if she would follow through on such a threat, but George knew there would be no mercy for him if she did.

"It isn't enough land to feed them. They cannot come to me if they get hungry," he warned, which was his way of conceding defeat.

"We won't do that, Uncle," Moses promised, before pushing past him with a flourish from his good left arm, and leading the two females onto the land that was now rightfully his.

"It's true, you know," Amy reminded Moses, when they were out of earshot of George. "You won't be able to feed yourselves with what you can grow here. Have you thought about that?"

"Madam, I been designing on that already. I reckon if I had a boda-boda, we could manage fine."

"But how would you drive with only one arm?" Amy asked, feeling awkward about mentioning something that Moses himself seemed oblivious to. There was no answer, and so she assumed she had made him aware of something that he had not previously considered.

After an awkward silence, conversation moved to other things, and there was no further mention of the boy's plans. Moses wanted to show Amy that he could still swing the jembe fine with just his left arm, and he took a few swings; but Amy cautioned him about exerting too much with either arm before the stitches had been removed from the stump. She forced herself not to get too involved, however. She had her own family to worry about, and in the end, Moses and Rosy Chikati would need to sort out their problems by themselves. Such was life in rural Kenya.

A few Saturdays later, Amy received another knock on her door. This time it was Rosy, and she was jumping up and down with excitement.

"Come! See!" she shouted, laughing almost hysterically to make it clear that she was bringing good news.

Amy rushed to the door and saw Moses barrelling up the dirt road from the markets with a trail of dust behind him, and a passenger on the back of a boda-boda. He pulled up in front of Amy's house, let his passenger off and then handed the bike over to that same passenger.

"Jidraph borrows me his bike when he's having a rest. I been getting lots of practice." he said, only slightly out of breath from his exhibition ride. "Me, I just need a ten-speed, like Jiddy, and I can ride fine. Starting is the hardest, but the

gears, they just help." Jiddy smiled at the compliment, before heading back toward the village.

A bike of any sort was too much for Moses to afford, and a ten-speed was considered a luxury even amongst the other boda-boda drivers. Jiddy was the only one in Shinyalu with one.

"Where are you going to get money for something like that?" Amy asked, knowing that he had been hoping she would help him out.

She then proceeded to share with him some of her own philosophy about money.

"My White mama always said 'Waste not, want not.' What that means is don't spend what you don't have. Then if you need it, you'll have it. You understand?"

"We're not wasting, Madam," Moses said politely. "But we're needing... real soon. Last year's maize is running to nothing, and we only just planted for this year. It'll be September before we get more."

Amy knew before the words had left her mouth that she had been preaching to herself and not to Moses when she lectured about thrift. She had seen many Kenyans get money and then waste it. The same had been true of her people in Australia. So the sermon was one that she often preached. But none of this applied to Moses. He had not done anything wrong, and he did not have anything to waste, even if he had wanted to.

The lecture had been a vain attempt to compensate for her own feelings of futility. Living within her means had always worked for her and the kids, although even now they were going through one of the leanest periods that she had ever experienced. Two of her three best supporters from Australia had stopped sending contributions. Otherwise, she might have had something to help Moses get started with herself.

There was a little micro-bank in Kakamega that she knew would loan the money for a bike, but borrowing was a sin in her books. Still, she couldn't just stand by and do nothing.

"You know, Moses, borrowing money is an awful way to live. Most people who do it, just keep borrowing more and more, and it makes them slaves to the ones they borrow from."

"Yes, Madam," Moses said, trying hard to understand what she was getting at.

"But if you were very very careful and I can help you with this maybe you could just this once borrow for a bike... a ten-speed if you like. You know, boy, if it was up to me and if I had it, I'd give you the money myself. But I just don't have it. There's a place in Kakamega where you can get a loan. You could pay them back from what you earn each week. If I took you there, would you be sure to pay them back, fast as you can?"

"Oh yeah, you bet, Madam. Hear that, Rosy? We can borrow some money to get started."

Amy cringed on hearing Moses react so enthusiastically to an offer of credit. She vowed to compensate for her sin by teaching him everything she knew about getting out of debt and staying out, so that she would not be responsible for any damage that might come from such a decision so early in his life.

The next day they went to town. With Amy's recommendation, Moses had no problem getting the loan. He ordered a ten-speed an hour later. If it had been a regular bike, he could have taken delivery then and there, but it would be a week before a ten-speed could be trucked up from Nairobi.

On the drive back to Shinyalu, Moses commented on the steep descent down to the river crossing, and the hill on the other side.

"Jiddy can just ride up with a passenger, but the others walk them up. Even me, I have to walk it. But it's the only place where I do. I been over this whole road on Jiddy's bicycle."

Rosy just grinned and giggled, with her hands clasped in her lap, kind of bouncing on the seat in anticipation of Moses starting work in a week's time.

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## Chapter 4. A Tight Budget

Over the next few months, Moses would stop by Amy's on the way back to his hut each night, when the kids were all in bed or close to it. With Amy's help, he would count his takings for the day, record it in a little notebook, and then put most of the money away where it would be safe. They worked out a budget that would enable him to repay the loan in half the time he had been allowed, and he was putting some aside for emergencies too... repairs, sickness, bad weather, seeds for the farm. It left him and his sister barely enough for the most basic food, but Moses loved the challenge.

"You know, my baba wasn't all bad, Winky," he said without warning one evening in May, when they were just locking up the little metal box that held his earnings. Amy had taught him to address her by name as all the children did. "He was real nice when he wasn't drinking," Moses went on.

He had often talked about missing his mother, but it was the first time Moses had brought up the subject of his father, and so Amy sat back in an old soft chair to listen.

"Tell me about him," she said.

"He killed Mama, I know, and that was awful," the boy said, taking a seat across the room from Amy. "Baba had other women, too, down at the hut. But he was always regretting. Hated himself. He told me so."

Then Moses just sat quietly for a moment, thinking, before he spoke again.

"It was you talking about money that made me reminisce of him," he said. "Baba talked to me like that many times... not about money, but about drinking mostly. Made me promise never to do it. He said we had good blood... kind blood, if the alcohol didn't get in it. I don't like what he did to mama; but I'm goin' ta keep my promise, Winky."

"That's good!" said Amy with deep feeling and a motherly smile. "You do that and you won't never regret it."

Business was good for Moses, and Moses was good at business. He had painted, as well as he could with his left hand, the words "Waste not; Want not" on the bike's mud flap as a reminder. He wasn't as fast as the older drivers, but there were people who would still choose him over the others when there were several waiting at the stand. Was it the thrill of riding on a ten-speed, or maybe they felt sorry for him because of his young age and his missing arm? It was hard to tell. He didn't want pity, and he would sometimes refuse a customer when other drivers had been waiting longer than himself. But he knew that, if it was the ten-speed attracting customers, in time, the novelty would wear off; he would need something else to bring in business.

Moses had one final piece of news to share with Amy that evening. It hadn't been mentioned earlier because he was nervous about how she would take it.

"Man from the micro-bank came to the village today," he said.

"Really?" asked Amy suspiciously. "What kind of business would he have way out here?"

"Took my picture!" said Moses with a proud grin. "For making a movie thing."

"He came all the way out here to take your picture?" Amy asked, still doing nothing to hide her suspicion.

"He wanted to see me ride the bike, and talk to people. Stuff like that. I was show acting for more than an hour. I missed a lot of fares because of it; but afterwards they all wanted to ride with me so I could tell them for myself what happened."

"And what is happening?" asked Amy, whose eye was twitching more than usual.

"They're making a testimonial or something, to show people how the bank works. I just talked about my testimony 'n stuff."

"Did they pay you anything?" Amy asked.

"No, but he gave a soda."

"I suppose it won't do no harm," said Amy. "But remember, son, you don't have to pose for pictures if you don't want."

"Me, I didn't do it cuz I had to, Amy. I did it because it was fun."

"Fair enough. Anyway, it's time for you to get on home. Rosy will be wondering what's happened."

The days were long for the two siblings, with Rosy working the shamba after school, and Moses putting in twelve to fourteen hours on the bike. He packed chapatis or ugali for lunch each day, but by knock-off time each evening, he was always starved. Rosy would have hot beans, ugali, and sukuma wiki waiting for him at home, and so he hurried off.

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## Chapter 5. Josephat

It was early June when Moses listened to Josephat for the first time in his life. He had seen him in the village a few times over the years, and had heard people talk about this strange wandering prophet, but he had never taken the time to actually listen to the man when he was younger. Josephat would just appear in a village in the morning, after having slept out in the open or on a doorstep from sometime in the middle of the night. He would stay for a few days, and then disappear as he had appeared, without warning, sometime during the night. Josephat walked wherever he went over the Kenyan interior, wearing a black felt hat and a robe-like covering made of rabbit skins. In his right hand was a beautifully carved walking stick, which, like the robe, was his own creation. No one knew exactly where the hat came from, but it added to the overall look of eccentricity.

People in the village listened to Josephat politely as he sat on the steps of the post office quietly sharing his message; but they were not about to join him in his strange lifestyle.

Western Kenya was mostly divided between Catholics, Quakers, and various Pentecostal and traditional sects. The Protestants took Josephat more seriously than the Catholics, but Catholics listened too. Moses didn't go to any church, but he was intrigued by Josephat's strange dress, and by things he had heard. It was midday and one of the busiest times for boda-boda drivers, but Moses left the stand and wheeled his bike over closer to the crowd, so he could pick up on what was being said.

"God's going to destroy those that destroys the earth," Josephat was saying quietly. He didn't shout like so many of the street preachers who frequented the village. He spoke quietly, and the people listened patiently, occasionally interjecting or asking a question.

"I think it's close now," he went on. "You can't trust the churches no more; the government is full-on corrupt; and the people are all sinning bad as ever. It's bad times. Won't be long till he destroys those that destroys the earth, like he sade in The Revelation."

"People been saying that for a long time, Josephat," said Obadiah, the postmaster, who had come out from behind the counter to listen; no one could get in or out of the post office anyway, not while Josephat was there. Obadiah was a respected elder in the Upendo Congregation of the Faithful, Church of the Holy Spirit, and a regular listener to Josephat's pronouncements. "I'm not saying you're wrong, brother, but I been hearing that for must be 20 years now."

"So we're 20 years closer now than we was when you first heard it," Josephat replied with a smile, and the crowd supported him, some because they could see the humour in what he was saying, and some because they could see the truth. Josephat himself had only been preaching in those parts for the past 10 or 12 years.

"We hafta be ready, brothers and sisters. We hafta be ready," he said to the crowd.

"And how do you think we can do that?" asked Obadiah.

"You hafta learn how to listen to the voice of the Spirit. Not your churches and your leaders, and not your own natural thinking. Just listen to the Spirit... honest and humble-like."

"And what if we can't hear no voices like you?" someone from the crowd interjected.

"You can hear," Josephat argued. "Not like I'm talking right now, you can't, but in your heart. You just have to be still enough and be real quiet in your spirit. Push away all your own thinking and your doubts, and you'll hear God talking... same as in your conscience."

"And what's he goin' ta say?" the same voice asked with a clear touch of cynicism.

"Different things to different peoples," Josephat answered, straight-faced. "But I know he'll say ni lazima about getting ready."

"Ready for what, Josephat?" This question, from Obadiah, was expressed more sympathetically.

"Ready for the troubles. They's going to be troubles. Worst troubles in the history of everything. I can't say what you need to do, cuz some of it's secrets, just for the dearly beloved. You hafta ask Him if you want to find out. But real soon now, he's goin' ta destroy them that's destroying the world. That's what he told me."

Moses couldn't see much difference in what Josephat was saying and what he had heard other locals say... especially the Pentecostals. Jesus coming back. End of the world. It didn't seem to make much difference in the way they lived, though. So what was the point?

Of course it did make a difference to Josephat, and that was probably why people listened so intently to him when he came through. He would turn up in the village maybe once or twice a year, sometimes carrying a plastic container of honey, or at some other time carrying bowls which he had carved from local wood. He never sold his stuff, just gave it to different people. But others gave him things that he needed too... maize mostly. It could have been how he got the felt hat that had become one more item in his overall image. He would only ever stay long enough to preach for a few days like he was doing now before moving on.

That night when Moses arrived at Amy's, she offered him some honey with his tea.

"Where'd you get that, Winky?" he asked gruffly.

"A friend gave it to me," she said with a smile.

"You mean that old preacher man with the walking stick, don't you?" Moses stated. "I didn't know he was your friend." He was definitely not impressed.

"Has been for a couple of years," Amy answered.

"So you believe the stuff he saze?"

"Depends on what stuff," answered Amy.

"End of the world stuff," said the youngster.

"I do and I don't," she answered cryptically. "It's more spiritual for me... being ready to die... doing what God wants. Stuff like that."

Something strange was happening. Moses didn't think of Amy as a mother. She had her family, and there wasn't time for her to be more than a friend to him.

So he didn't feel jealous about the time she gave to the other children. But something about her having this friendship with Josephat bothered him. Why hadn't Winky ever said anything to him before, about Josephat being her friend? And what business did he have with her in the first place? A bit of honey didn't give him the right to mess with her head if, in fact, that was what he was doing.

All of this was going through Moses' mind in a way that clashed with his normally clear thinking. He could see that he was reacting strangely, but he still believed the problem lay with Josephat and not with himself. Josephat wasn't just messing with Winky's mind; he was messing with his too. And Moses didn't like it.

"Son, Josephat is doing the best he knows to serve his God, same as you trying hard to care for Rosy," Amy explained. "We each have our jobs to do, and the Good Lord has the final word on us all."

"Yeah, sure," Moses said, looking uncharacteristically glum. But not for long. He just didn't have the disposition to stay upset for long.

"Anyway, let's count the money," he said, bouncing back in that incurably optimistic way of his. "Me, I got a couple of big fares this afternoon. I wanna see if it evenates for what I missed at lunch time."

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## **Chapter 6. An Exciting Offer**

Two weeks later, in the mid-afternoon, Moses turned up just as Amy was changing Karla's nappy.

"Get the door for Amy," she said to Jo-Jo, a four-yearold who was the only one of the children other than Karla, who was not in school.

Little Jo-Jo opened the door and then just looked over his shoulder at Amy.

"Who is it?" Amy asked.

"Mo-Mo," the toddler responded.

"C'mon in, Moses!" Amy shouted.

"I have someone, Winky. Can he come in too?"

"Sure, bring him in. I'll just be a minute with Karla."

Moses came in, followed by the man from the micro-bank in Kakamega. Amy recognised him from when she had taken Moses in to get his loan.

"This is Mr. Barasa from the bank," Moses said.

"Yeah, I remember him." Amy answered. "What brings you here, Mr. Barasa?"

"I asked him to come," Moses answered. "It's about that movie they made."

"Jambo," Mr. Barasa said, extending his hand.

"Jambo sana," Amy dutifully replied, shaking his hand.

"Moses says you helped him organise his finances. He's done a very good job of paying off the loan."

"Thank you," Amy said, knowing with certainty that Mr. Barasa had not come all the way from Kakamega to thank Moses for getting ahead on his payments.

"I have good news. People at our office in Chicago liked the video we made of Moses. They want to do more filming, but in America this time. It would be a wonderful experience for the boy, and we would look after him, take care of everything. He'll meet others like himself, coming from other countries, and one of them will be used to promote the bank all over the world next year."

The eye for which Amy had earned her nickname was twitching double-time, as evidence of her concern over this decision. She could see by Moses' face that he was overjoyed at what Mr. Barasa was saying. To her, it sounded a little too good; and she could not escape that bad feeling she had about anything to do with banks.

"The bank will pay for everything. We'll buy him new clothes, and he'll stay at a nice hotel in Chicago," Barasa continued. "Moses says he doesn't have a guardian, so we thought we should run this by you first. He says you're his best friend." The twitch slowed, but only slightly.

"How long would he be away? What about his sister... Rosy? He doesn't even have a passport." Questions flooded in, mostly negative ones, like Amy was looking for a good excuse to call off the trip.

"I know someone who can fast track a passport, and we'll pay you to look after his sister, if you would be so kind. Moses will only be away two weeks... maximum."

Amy was through with Karla, so she quickly washed her hands over a basin, in a stream of water from a plastic pitcher. She dried them on her dress as she entered the room where Moses and his friend were still standing.

"Please take a seat, and tell me about this," she said.

They all sat down.

The bank manager explained the need for more people to invest with the micro-bank. It would make funds available to help others like Moses, who wanted to start small businesses in developing countries. Shareholders did not receive as much on their investments with his bank, but they had the satisfaction of knowing that their money was being used to help people who would never be able to get a loan from traditional banks.

Branches all over the world had been asked, he explained, to watch for customers who would be a good advertisement for what the bank was trying to do. The amateur video that Mr. Barasa had made of Moses was one of three that had been chosen, and one of those three people would be named "customer of the year". If he was successful, people in many countries would hear Moses' story, about how he had been able to support his younger sister, despite his disability and despite being without parents, all because the micro-bank had helped him get a bike... a ten-speed... to earn a living and pay off the loan. The fact that he was paying off his loan in half the allotted time would, according to the bank manager, impress the judges in Chicago even more.

"I don't know..." said Amy. "It's not really up to me to decide. Things are going so well for the boy right now. He's worked very hard to get that loan paid off. This could just take him away from what he's doing here."

"It's only two weeks, Winky," Moses pleaded.

"Would you like to see what we filmed?" Mr. Barasa



asked. "I have a copy in my vehicle."

"Can we, Winky?" Moses asked.

"Yeah, sure, that would be fine," Amy replied. "Will it run off a car battery? It's all the power we have."

"We can watch it on my laptop," Mr. Barasa said, as he stood to leave.

"What do you think about this, Moses?" Amy asked when Barasa was out of earshot. "Are you sure you want to go to another country? Things would be very different for you over there. I don't think you'd like it."

"Oh, I do want to go, Winky," Moses assured her. "Me, I want to see America... what it's like! Even if it's a disappointment, I'll be back before two weeks."

"Who would look after you?"

"Winky, no one looks after me now!" he laughed. "You think I need someone to bodyguard me? And these people are rich! They'll take care of me. Look at Mr. Barasa!" He pointed out the front window where the bank manager was just leaving his vehicle to return to the house. "See, that's a four-wheel drive he's got. New as a hot loaf of bread! The bank gave it to him."

Mr. Barasa re-entered the house with a computer bag over his shoulder. The bag itself was impressive, with compartments for everything, and so was the computer. He carefully lifted it out of the bag, put it on the coffee table, and then slipped a DVD in the slot on the side. A moment later, he had it playing the film clip that had been prepared for his head office. It was edited, of course, to include the best parts of what they had filmed.

Moses, who had not yet seen the film himself, watched with as much interest as Amy, who was genuinely curious about what her young friend had become involved in. Jo-Jo wandered over to the table and needed to be restrained from interfering with the computer.

"Me, I was in big troubles," Moses was saying at the start of the promotional clip. "I mean really big. And then I got this loan and it... it... revegetated me!" Then he just grinned his biggest grin for the camera, and held it.

There were pictures of Moses waiting at the bike stand with the other drivers, a scene with a customer getting on his bike, then one with him riding off with the customer on the back of the bike. Over all of these, Moses' voice could be heard as he explained his situation.

"Me and my sister didn't have no one to look out for us when my mother died. We was just like that: no work and no food. But when the loan came, even I got a bike, a ten-speed. This is it here. I can't get started properly on a one-speed; but in a low gear on this bike, it's easy as cake." For the last few words the camera shifted back to where Moses was showing off his new bike. The image dropped down to a closeup of the gear sprockets.

Then it jumped forward to where he was letting his customer off at the destination, and the customer was fishing in his pocket for some money. The camera zoomed in on the money as it was handed over.

"Now we have food and even we have some extra for stormy times," he said as the final footage rolled.

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