

**A SEAT OF
MANY COLOURS**

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Thank you to everyone who has been part of this journey.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this literary work to God Almighty, for the inspiration behind this book can only come from Him. I thank Him for the grace to discover, nurture, and develop the gift of storytelling that He has deposited within me.

I am also grateful for the compassion He has placed in my heart, enabling me to see the afflictions of others and be moved by their stories. It is my sincere hope that He is pleased with the way I am using this gift and the purpose for which He entrusted it to me on this earth.

To God alone be all the glory.

PROLOGUE

When you're old and grey, the kids are perpetually away. They do not think they're kids anymore, but you know they'll always be your kids.

There's a mine brimming in you, memories in abundance; though some may torment you, others will bring you joy. You most likely have no use for them except, maybe, to hurt sometimes and smile other times.

Oh, you can tell stories. Yes, you can. But this is only once in a while, maybe a lifetime, when the kids are around. Just like today.

My niece, Treasure, and her grown children are visiting, all the way from America, and I have taken a short trip to Abina's, my sister's house to be with them.

Since Abina and her daughter, Treasure, went to the Kente market, I had the pleasure of being alone with the children, all five of them.

As I watched them munch on the Sobolo and Kewelewe I prepared them, pride spilt over my heart. My sister, Abina, and I sometimes revelled in moments of euphoria about the accomplishments of the kids; Akuba who was Miss Ghana, USA, Dzifa who was a medical doctor just like his mother, Treasure and Aboagye were Congressmen in Austin, Texas, and Abina, my sister's namesake was a prolific writer with multiple awards.

I finally let out what I'd had in mind, "how about a story?"

Bulging eyes shot up at me from around the table. "Story?" They chorused.

"Do we still tell tales by the moonlight in this generation?" Akuba said.

"It's not even evening yet, Grand aunt, at least maybe then we could sit under a tree and gaze at the moon," Dzifa said. Laughter erupted around the table.

"What's the story about?" Abina asked.

"It's a story about your grandmother, Abina, her close bond with her husband, Kwame, his painful disappearance, her denial of the speculations about his death and her faith in Kwame's return."

Silence settled upon them. That was my cue to begin the story that's scarcely been told all these years.

CHAPTER ONE

Abina was such a happy child growing up, being a blessing to our family and a pride to the Nchumuru tribe. She was born to a family of farmers. Our parents owned a cassava farm of over 5000 sqm. It was this that Papa used to take care of his two wives and eleven children.

Mama being the first wife had only two daughters; her first child came after seven long years of marriage. Being unable to conceive, my grandmother imposed a new wife on Papa.

Papa's second wife bore four sons before Mama had me. It is said that my birth was mysterious as I was born after 15 months in Mama's womb, and I was born with a skin condition called mild Vitiligo.

Mama became an object of mockery, insulted and humiliated by her fellow women in the village. They called her all sorts of derogatory names. In all this, Papa stood by her.

She then had Abina about 2 years and 6 months after my birth. Abina was born with full, curly, thick hair and thick pink lips. She was a beauty to behold, and everyone wanted to carry her as a baby.

Papa took Abina and me wherever he went. People wondered why Papa did not show such love to his male children, knowing that male children were more valued than female children in the Nchumuru tribe.

Papa's second wife later had 5 children, and her last two were a set of twins. However, one thing was obvious, Papa loved us more because he felt his second wife was imposed on him by his overbearing mother Nana Ajoba.

We grew up with so much love from our parents.

When I turned 20, I got married to Yoofi, a middle-class man who worked as a cashier at a cotton farm in Nchumuru, owned by French immigrants.

Yoofi was slightly educated, and this gave him an edge over other men in our village. I was attracted to him. He was well-groomed and well-spoken.

Five years into our marriage, and after two children, my husband and I relocated to France in search of greener pastures. This was the year 1992.

Mama was not in support of me travelling that far. She wanted her children close to her because she saw us as her covering.

"How can I be a mother when you, my children, are all so far away." She often said.

After my relocation, she made Abina promise to marry and stay right in Nchumuru, northern Ghana.

Abina took Mama's hand and enclosed it in both her hands, "Mama, I'm not going anywhere," she said.

"Do you promise?" Mama asked.

"I promise."

That wasn't such a difficult promise to keep because, soon enough, a tall dark and handsome man named Kwame, papa's namesake, came asking for Abina's hand in marriage.

He was a native of Nchumuru; he worked at a post office by day and a town's vigilante, known as the Nchumuru warriors, by night. In fact, he was the vigilante's head.

Mama loved him without a doubt but not as much as Abina. Mama made sure she gave Abina all the tips to keep him.

Abina was the talk of the town due to the deep love and respect Kwame had for her and our family. While wooing her, he would take bush meat to Mama every weekend. Papa and Kwame would play draft every Saturday evening while they enjoyed Kelewele made by Mama.

Kwame and Abina were in love, everyone could see it. Their story was like the ones you saw on TV. They held hands everywhere they went. Most evenings, Kwame would visit Abina, and they would both sit under a tree and talk endlessly.

They would stare at the stars, and then Kwame would promise Abina the world. Abina believed every word he spoke. To her, he could tell no lie.

The couple couldn't wait to get married, but there was one problem which was a concern to everyone. Kwame's parents did not like Abina and therefore did all they could to stop them. But, you see, a love like theirs was indefatigable. It was only a matter of time before they wearied all opposition.

CHAPTER TWO

The day of their wedding was bright and sunny. Everyone had converged to celebrate with them. There was something resplendent in how the sunshine illuminated the smiles on faces and ricocheting waves of laughter. Yet there was nothing nearly as beautiful as the look in the couples' eyes.

It was in how they exchanged furtive glances; it was in their chuckles and shy gestures. That day in July 1993 was such a remarkable day of love. Although Kwame's family did not show much excitement, our family was excited to have Kwame as our in-law.

Shortly, the marriage ceremony was over, and everyone dispersed, leaving the couple to commence their life-long journey.

Their love grew deeper with time. Before long, gossip made rounds, villagers made evil assumptions that Kwame was hypnotized by Abina with charms given to her by Mama.

This made Abina very uncomfortable, however, Kwame did not care. Kwame loved Abina so much and was never ashamed to show it.

Soon, Abina became pregnant. Kwame was excited and would not let her lift so much as a pin. He was pleased to take on all the house chores. Oh, he was so excited to become a father.

He asked the talented only Nigerian carpenter from the East, based in Nchumuru, to make a comfortable seat of many colours using the Kante African print so she could sit more comfortably due to her pregnancy.

The seat looked like a throne. He also wanted the seat to help her maintain a good posture and a healthy back. This was the only sophisticated furniture in their abode. Kwame always made her feel special.

Distant as we were, Abina loved to tell me all about her husband's love escapades. In those days, mobile phones were not as ubiquitous as they are now. She would walk 2 kilometres to the town's call centre to put a call across to me.

"Abina, you're such a lucky woman." I once said to her.

"Well, we also have our issues as all couples do." She replied.

"Sure, all couples do have their issues. But that doesn't change the fact that you have it better than most, Abina, and you know it." I was speaking from experience.

For most of my married life, I had to deal with Yoofi's infidelity which he started with the landlady of the condominium we rented in Lyon, France. Since then, I trained myself to focus my love and attention on my kids.

"I understand," Abina said, "things will get better, sis."

"But will they?" I said.

"I believe."

However brief those moments were with Abina on the phone, I looked forward to them. Those were the only times I was taking a break from my motherly duties.

* * *

Kwame's family, for the unrest which they shared towards Kwame and Abina, soon began to send spies to them, seeking occasion against them to instigate trouble between them.

They expressed their discomfort in how Kwame pampered Abina to the extent of washing her clothes and unmentionables. This, surely, became an occasion for them to vilify the couple.

They slowly began to lean towards the inclination that Kwame had been hypnotised.

But one thing they did not know, neither did they understand, it was love at its comeliest.

Nothing more, nothing less.

CHAPTER THREE

By the year 1994, Abina's pregnancy was a few months old. Kwame was mostly away and returning late in the evening for days in a row. Abina would trudge around the house to tidy things up and prepare meals for her husband before he arrived.

She observed he had been slipping, every day, steeper into silence, and it was beginning to worry her. Her Kwame wasn't one to fall into silence for days in a row. He preferred to discuss things with her. No matter what it was.

One Thursday, she was carrying a bucket of clothes to spread on the lines outside the house when Kwame walked in. She laid the bucket down, instinctively, and leaped into her husband's arms.

He stroked her hair backwards while embracing her. He seemed dispassionate, pensive, distant, and she could sense it.

"How's my darling wife doing today?" He managed.

"Better now that you're here." She said, leading him to a chair in the sitting room.

Watching him sit, "You have been withdrawn for days, my king," she began, "Please, will you tell me what's going on?"

He stared into her eyes as if trying to determine how much to say. "It's the Konkomba-Nanumba land conflict. It's been reenacted again."

She sat down slowly and then asked the only question that came to mind, "What happened?"

"There was a disagreement over a black guinea fowl between a Konkomba man and a Nanumba man at Nakpayili, near the Togolese border.

"They both engaged in an intense Ghanaian pass-time bargain. Tempers flared into a brawl. The next day, the Konkomba man killed his rival who got the guinea fowl. Now a full-scale battle has erupted."

"Oh my goodness." Abina chided in.

"Nanba, Dagomba and Gongga have teamed up against us. Likewise, we have allied with Konkomba, Nawuri and Basare tribes so that we can defend our people and reduce further casualties because, at the moment, hundreds of lives have been lost."

"Oh, God," Abina was fidgeting, taping her foot endlessly to the ground, "hundreds?" Her eyes glistened.

Kwame nodded.

He pondered his next words and would have thought against it, but she needed to know. "I have been trusted to lead the Nchumuru warriors to team up with other allies.

"the chiefs called upon us to protect our land, we're to assemble..."

"I do not care what the chiefs said. It's you I care about, my husband."

Kwame was silent.

"Why not hand the matter over to law upholders?"

"It has escalated, and before they arrive, we'd need to protect ourselves," he raised a palm to her cheek, "our families." He said, staring into her eyes.

"I can not sit back and do nothing. I fight for you."

"But I do not want you to fight, please."

He tore his gaze away. "Who will comfort me when you're away for days? And what will I do if you do not return to me?"

"Do not you say that, my love. I will return to you. I promise."

Tenacious as she might have been, Abina knew she had lost the fight. The next morning, they hugged endlessly. Then Kwame turned around, wiped the tears from his eyes and headed straight to the square where the Nchumuru warriors were to meet to depart for the border.

CHAPTER FOUR

For the first five days at the border, the Nchumuru warriors did a great job of protecting their land from their direct enemies. They were able to take down 23 Nanumbe warriors and warriors of the Gonga tribe trying to invade the land to displace the people.

The communal clash had subsided a little and Kwame broke protocol to rush back home to see his pregnant wife.

That evening, Abina was all alone, sober and trying to make some palm nut soup for dinner when her husband Kwame walked into the banana leaf barricade of their home. He ducked behind her to help pick up the wooden plate which was on the ground, she turned in fear to see who it was because she barely entertained visitors.

She screamed for joy. Kwame gave her a warm hug. He was disappointed to find her working after he had pleaded with his sister Afryea to come and stay with Abina since she was young and had no suitor at the time.

Abina explained to Kwame how she had been all by herself, writhing in vacuity with no one to visit her besides her mother who came to visit occasionally due to her father's ill health.

Kwame in his usual caring and loving nature took over the cooking that evening. He asked Abina to go in, have a bath and rest. He prepared a nice catfish palm nut soup and went to the nearby market to buy ready-made fufu as he was tired and did not want to stress his wife.

On his way home, he stopped over to buy some fruits and beverages for Abina. On getting home, he took his bath and served the food. Abina and he had dinner that night with Kwame playing Mr. Romantic.

After dinner, he took to massaging her swollen feet. "I will be leaving for the borders first thing tomorrow morning." He said.

"Again?" She responded. "But you have barely even spent time with me."

"I know. I couldn't help but steal away just to see my queen." He made a face, trying to patronize her.

When she did not respond, "Coming home was a big risk, my love, but I did it for you. Besides, I'll be back before you know it. Okay?"

Tears slid down her eyes. Kwame embraced her and whispered calmly, "Everything will be back to normal soon."

He told her his family would come along to treat her like the amazing person that she was. She soon drifted to sleep in his embrace. The next morning, when she awoke, Kwame was gone.

Before long, at the borders, another set of enemies from the Nanumbe tribe were apprehended by the Nchumuru warriors. They were then paraded by the warriors around Nchumuru.

A spy who heard about this alerted the Nanumba tribesmen. They came up with a treacherous plan to attack when the Nchumuru warriors amongst other allies thought the communal clash was over and had therefore laid down their guard.

The Nanumbe people collaborated with their allies leading to over 500 warriors. They went in mass and attacked the vigilante warriors of the Kokomba and their allies, consisting of the Nchumuru, Nawuri and Basare warriors at the borders of their lands. They injured many, slaughtered many and captured many.

Soon the Ghanaian Government intervened to stop further deaths and mishaps. They declared a curfew to restrict movement. The town criers also were restricted from movement. Not having heard any news for days, everyone was troubled.

Abina was worried. Mama was worried because she could not step out of the house to visit Abina as she wanted to.

On the market day of the Nchumuru tribe, news flew about town that a good number of the Nchumuru warriors were captured, some injured and some killed. Meanwhile, before then only people who lived close to the borders were aware of the deaths and capture of the Nchumuru warriors.

That day, mama came visiting with some herbs to help Abina push easily during her delivery at the house of the Nchumuru's head midwifery, scheduled in 7 market days.

While she boiled the leaves for Abina to drink and have a hot bath, sounds of haste and distress emanated suddenly from behind her. Terrified, she swivelled.

It was Afryea, Kwame's sister. The one who never came around no matter how much her brother begged.

CHAPTER FIVE

"Abina, Abina," she shouted. Abina heard her voice and tried to come out of the house when she was accosted by Mama and was asked to go back inside. Mama then approached Afryea and asked what the matter was.

"News got to us today that Kwame and other vigilantes have been attacked at the borders. Kwame's friend who lives close to the borders broke this news to us today," She said, panting, "The news is all over town."

Mama yelled, grabbing her head with her hands.

Abina, Kwame and both their families lived far from the borders. Nchumuru was a big town, and only a few could afford radios.

The people of Nchumuru banked on the news they got from the town crier. Both families and the families of some of the warriors were taken aback by this information because the town crier said nothing about this occurrence which was days old according to Kwame's friend.

Abina heard everything while snooping, and she screamed. Mama and Afryea rushed to her. She kept screaming, "Where is my Kwame, Kwame, Kwame?"

She had been worried sick for days, but now her anxieties were confirmed. Her water broke and she went into labour. Before long, she gave birth to a bouncing baby girl and fainted after delivering the placenta beside the seat of many colours which her husband got for her.

Afryea and Mama immediately catered to her and her baby. She awoke, but she was very weak. Soon Afryea left to go alert Kwame's family about the premature labour of Abina and her present situation.

Kwame's brother-in-law rushed to the border with his father, a retired Nchumuru warrior. When they arrived there, they found the chiefs and parents of other warriors of Nchumuru.

Bodies were found lifeless at the border, some warriors were unconscious and some were badly injured with machet bruises all over. Kwame's father searched for his son and couldn't find him.

Another village chief named Sibiri couldn't find his son either. This caused even more pandemonium at the borders. The Nchunuru chiefs sent for the youth to come and carry the warriors into the land to be catered to and the dead to be buried.

Kwame's father and brother walked away from the scene in anger, pain and disappointment.

While Abina was asleep. Afryea walked into the house and yet again she was accosted by Mama. She gave more in-depth details about what had happened to Kwame. While she was explaining, mama's eldest sister who lived close by came to visit Abina with some herbs.

She came along with the chief matron who was supposed to take Abina's delivery and her youngest daughter. She did this to help Mama, knowing that Mama had been overwhelmed lately due to Papa's ill health and Abina's unplanned delivery.

Mama asked Afryea to deliver the important message that she had in mind. While Afryea did this, Mama broke down in tears.

First, she was disturbed by the immature way Afryea had planned to handle the issue at hand before she was accosted, she was disappointed that Afryea could not decide on a more appropriate manner to break such sensitive news to a new nursing mother.

While everyone scolded Afryea, Abina came out of the room with a smile on her face. Everyone cooperated and smiled back at her.

"Why such a wonderful smile?" Mama asked.

"I saw Kwame in my dreams, and he told me to relax knowing he is safe." She told Afryea to go and tell her father that Kwame is safe and she believes he will return soon.

Mama couldn't contain her emotions, she broke down in tears, and Abina saw compassion in Afryea's eyes for the first time. Then Afryea came closer to her and delineated all that had happened.

On hearing it, Abina screamed and collapsed to the ground. Mama hastened to her and pleaded with her to calm down and take things with ease.

Mama's eldest sister walked to Abina, stooped to the ground and comforted her with a song. Abina cried herself to silence. Then she stopped crying because she had lost the strength to continue.

Before long she fell asleep. While she slept, they helped her feed her child. Everyone slept over at Abina's house.

The next morning Abina jolted up as early as 5 am, and, against all warnings from the federal soldiers, Abina set out to go and look for Kwame at the borders and see things for herself. This trip took about an hour by foot.

She got there and could not find Kwame dead or alive. Then she went to Basare boarders, Konkomba boarders and Nawuri boarders screaming, "Kwame, Kwame," all to no avail.

She then staggered home tired, breast milk dripping from her shirt. At the borders of Nchumuru, Abina was spotted by a villager who had compassion on her and took her home after scolding her for her disobedience to the curfew.

Her family was worried about her and imagined the worst. She was carried into the house by the kind villager. They were all in the parlour discussing how to go in different directions around the town in search of Abina.

Sighting Abina being carried into the house, they all ran to her except Mama who broke down in tears.

They thanked the kind Nchumuru indigene, entertained him with some cold Lamugin and bade him goodbye.

Afterwards, they took care of Abina and brought her baby to her to feed for the child had been cranky and hungry since morning.

On hearing about the sad state of his daughter, papa limped all the way to Abina's house. He walked up to her on seeing her depressed and bent down to hug her. "This too shall pass," he said.

Mama smiled. She was proud of her ever-caring husband who limped with his wounded foot, which had barely healed due to diabetic complications, all the way to Abina's house to show her care and support.

However, she looked further at the entrance to see if her stepchildren accompanied Papa or her co-wife but there were no other visitors. She adjusted her look and tried to maintain a grateful one for Papa.

On another sad note, none of Kwame's family members showed up to console or strategize with Abina except Afryea whose conscience had her stuck. Not even in crisis could they stand by their daughter-in-law.

That day was a sad day for Abina. No one knew whether to congratulate her on the birth of her child or to console her. It was a difficult day for everyone around her too.

The next day, rumours of the conversation Kwame's father had with his friend, who then told his wife, flew about the town. Kwame's father accused Abina of keeping Kwame away from his family until his death. He said Kwame was trapped between her legs.

These words of merciless vituperations got to Abina by town visitors who came to console her. Some acted like they cared, but all they came to do was to rub her pain on her face.

She was sad because their motives were obvious, however, she decided to be strong for her daughter, and her parents and strong enough to believe in the return of her husband Kwame who she insisted was alive.

CHAPTER SIX

Days flew past, and so did weeks, and months, yet no word from Kwame. Kwame's family relaxed in searching for him when they realised the communal clash had subsided. This was August, yet no word from Kwame or any of the missing Nchumuru warriors.

Abina kept hope alive, she took care of her daughter who she named Treasure and was pertinacious in her belief of Kwame's return.

Each time she thought of Kwame, she would sit on the seat of many colours, carrying her daughter on her thighs. She was always excited to sit on that seat after carrying out her daily activities.

She sat there to think of the great memories she shared with Kwame.

Two years passed by and still not a word from Kwame. By this time, suitors had started coming for Abina's hand in marriage but she turned down every suitor.

The year 1998 was a good year. Abina had the opportunity to work for some French missionaries who came to establish a Catholic school in Nchumuru.

She was the head chef at the convent specially prepared for these missionaries by the chiefs to encourage their effort.

The missionaries loved Abina so much for her work ethic and sumptuous meals, and even more, her child, Treasure, was a breath of fresh air to all who resided at the convent.

A beauty to behold and a joy to have. The missionaries stayed in Nchumuru for three years. Afterwards, they were called upon by the education ministry in Accra for a slightly different reason.

Their stay there was to last for three months. For her service and loyalty which they loved, they pleaded with Abina to accompany them.

Mama gave her the go-ahead this time because she wanted Abina to have a change of environment. Abina on the other hand was ready for a new start since Kwame's family did not care about her or her daughter Treasure.

Abina and Treasure eventually left for Accra. Abina's star and talent kept shining. After three months, it was time for the missionaries to return to Paris, France. They yet again pleaded with Abina to accompany them.

Mother Rita, the eldest missionary, shared a special bond with Treasure. Mama did not resist this as she was happy about the fact that Abina and I would be close.

Abina packed all her belongings to Papa's house. Most importantly, the seat of many colours that her husband bought for her.

Abina's and her daughter's visas were processed. Shortly, they both accompanied the missionaries to the parish in Paris where Abina was made the African chef of the convent.

Treasure was also exposed to a good standard of education. She had a thing for languages. She became multilingual. Everyone in the convent loved her. The nuns saw her as their child and almost argued with each other to have a good playtime with Treasure.

The nuns taught her how to sing, how to play the piano, and how to pray. Also, proper French.

Abina and I became close to each other. I often visited to see her at the convent in Paris, and she reciprocated. Apart from our sisterly bond which we were excited about, we wanted our children to be close to each other.

Treasure, my beautiful niece, was such a bright child and she did well academically, by age 17 she was accepted to study medicine at Sorbonne University.

Abina and I raised some money to buy ourselves a decent 3-bedroom terrace each in Accra, Ghana's capital, and we also bought Mama and Papa a six-bedroom mansion, a family house, in Accra.

This we did because my stepmother left Papa's house to go and stay with her son in Tacorde who made money from cybercrime.

His other brothers followed my stepmother, thus leaving Papa and Mama all alone. Abina and I wanted to give our parents a better quality of life than the one they always had.

We asked Papa to abandon farming and lease the land to a much younger farmer in search of a plot to farm. We all paid a visit to Papa and Mama during festive periods.

Mama was always excited to see her grandchildren. Mama was proud of her grandchildren. My children, all boys, were in the university studying professional courses with my first child in the final year, while Treasure was studying medicine.

After 7 years in medical school and housemanship, Treasure graduated as the best-graduating student at the University and was given instant employment by the government of France for her brilliance and multilingual intelligence.

One cozy evening, Treasure visited her mother in the convent with her friend, Dennis. She came to show her mother the man she was courting. And within a short period of courting, Dennis proposed to Treasure.

Abina was excited; Dennis's parents were excited too especially because Dennis's father was Treasure's project supervisor at the medical school. Although he gardened and led a simple life, he was a retired professor of medicine. Mama and Papa also were excited.

As custom demanded, we fixed a date for all travel to Nchumuru for the wedding.

On the day of the wedding, after we had given invites to Kwame's family, they were shocked at how the family had blossomed into greatness.

They were shocked to see Treasure become a medical doctor and marry honourably. The people of our town, who hopped onto the free big bus we sent to bring the chiefs of our land to the wedding, could not help but show their surprise at the wedding.

When it was time for the groom to present the bride price to the family of the bride, Abina collected the cash gift amongst other gifts and placed them on the seat of many colours that her husband bought for her.

Her eyes grew distant while she spoke, "I do not believe Kwame is dead," she said, looking around, "if he is, where is his corpse? While we wait for his return, my husband and I happily accept this bride price. I represent my husband today with the beautiful seat of many colours that he bought for me."

The crowd cheered her on as she spoke, albeit, gossips flew about as was the custom of the people.

EPILOGUE

Seated, as it were, around the dining table, their eyes were fastened on me, and I relished every moment of it.

"Your parents have raised you well, and this is a thing of pride to us all."

Looking around at them, I spread my hands in the air to say, "Well, this is the story about your grandmother. Abina and I now live in Ghana, proudly and happily."

That won me a smile around the table.

"So, you see this seat in your grandmother's house," I pointed to the seat of many colours, "treat it with care, it means a lot to her as it brings good memories of the love she shared with Kwame, and her faith that he is alive, and her belief that he will return to her, one day!"