

PART ONE

The rusty metal gong of the town crier screamed loudly as he hit it continuously. He walked swiftly to every corner, side, and length of the village, gaining the attention of every villager.

The screams of the gong couldn't be mistaken. It cried out, projecting warning, despair, and fear.

The howling wind and claps of thunder signaling the soon arrival of their master, the rain did not stop the town crier from delivering his message.

The gong cried out a continuous rhythm, hoping every villager heard.

Villagers closer to their homes hurriedly packed up their wares and children in as the continuous screams of the gong fueled their anxiety.

The town crier needed not to say anything as the gong already did the talking.

The Villagers understood why the gong cried so hard, but some of the villagers never wanted to discuss why with their children in order not to satisfy their curiosity.

Villagers on their way from the farm and stream heard the cry of the gong and ran as fast as they could, the heel of their feet almost reaching the back of their heads.

None of the villagers ran because of the rain, but the fear of being outside after the gong stops and darkness walks in.

Once the sound of the gong stops, every villager is left to themselves. Families to their families and people to whatever fate.

As darkness settles down, sits upon earth, and begins to rule the night, no villager dares let anyone into their hut.

The mist and fog of the night settles in and all villagers are left to sleep in fear and silence.

Villagers who didn't know much about what happens after dark believed mystical spirits roamed the village after dark and took people they saw.

Others thought the gods roamed the village after dark and it was taboo for mortals to sight them.

"Death isn't what kills but the fear of death is what kills" The town crier had once announced some nights ago to the villagers as he wanted to make sure the villagers were conscious of their safety but also without fear.

It was easier said, but could the villagers live without fear?

Anyone who had lost someone to the dark could not believe this preaching. It was easier to live in fear than live without fear, especially when no one knew who could disappear next.

PART TWO

"Somethings are best left unknown," Ayanwale's parents told her for the umpteenth time.

Ayanwale had always been inquisitive since she began speaking. She always wanted to know "why", "when", and "who."

"Why won't you just tell me what happens after dark?" Ayanwale asked her parents again. She was tired of hearing the same things over and over again.

"She would grow weary and stop asking like other children" Ayanwale's parents always said to themselves, but they never completely believed their words, at least not anymore.

They knew she had always been different from other children in the village, and as she grew older, her curiosity became harder to tame.

"We are just trying to keep you safe" Ayanwale's mother had said to her.

"You're just sixteen years old Ayanwale, can't you be like other children who listen to their parents without asking questions?" Ayanwale's father said, trying to contain his disappointment and rising anger.

The saying, "Blood is thicker than water" is really true as Ayanwale and her father had stubbornness and bad temper running through their veins.

"Are you hiding anything?" Ayanwale asked both her parents. She had more questions, and she would keep asking them until she got answers.

She was determined to get answers today regardless of the situation.

"Does this have anything to do with the disappearance of Ayanfe?" Ayanwale confronted her parents.

That was all her father needed to hear to lose his temper.

This had been a sore topic for both her parents.

Ayanfe had been as inquisitive as Ayanwale, worse even.

Ayanfe's sudden disappearance was believed to be due to his inquisitive nature and continuous bid to find out what happens after dark.

The storytellers in the village used the disappearance of Ayanfe to scare the children and urge them to stay in once it got dark.

“The next time you bring up Ayanfe or speak about this topic again, that day you’ll cease to be my daughter” Ayanwale’s father roared at her. His eyes held hurt, pain and most of all, anger.

“I am sorry papa” Ayanwale mumbled under her breath as she left the house.

If her parents weren’t going to tell her what happened after dark or what had happened to her brother, she was going to find out herself and she was going to do that tonight.

PART THREE

The town crier had done his job and everyone and family were in their home, getting set to sleep in fear as always.

Ayanwale pretended to be as she watched her parents sleep.

After a few minutes, she walked up to her parents and waved her hands over their eyes to confirm if they were asleep.

As soon as she confirmed they were asleep, she tiptoed carefully, determined to get answers.

Was it worth it, she thought to herself. The rational part of her trying to stop her, but she was more determined. She was never one to be rational and she wasn’t going to start now.

She was going to get answers, if not to quench her curiosity but for Ayanfe.

Ayanwale soon got outside the house with the old family lamp as her guide.

There were streaks of fear in her heart, but she shrugged it off.

“For Ayanfe and for me” she kept saying to herself.

Ayanfe kept looking everywhere as she walked. She had no plans to go too far from the house, she just wanted to know if the myths were true or if there was more to her brother’s disappearance.

After walking a few houses away from hers, she realized the myths weren’t true, and neither did the dark have anything to do with her brother’s disappearance.

“Mama and Papa lied to me,” she thought to herself as she walked home.

She was going to confront them tomorrow morning and force them to tell her the truth about her brother's disappearance.

Ayanwale was thirty steps away from her house as she started mapping out plans on how she was going to start the conversations with her parents the next day when she heard a swish sound accompanied by and howl.

She turned around, searching for where the sound came from, but it became louder.

Ayanwale ran as she was so close to home.

She entered the house and shut the door frantically, resting her back on the door as her heart raced.

She peeped through the window trying to figure out what made those sounds, but nothing could have prepared her for what she saw.

The whole village was bare, not a single house in sight, and it seemed like she was alone in a barren land.

Confused, she begins to look for her parents in the house.

“Mama, Papa” she called out, but no response.

She dashed from room to room, calling out her parents but no voice was heard, just hers.

Still, in search of her parents, the swish sound was suddenly heard, in hand with the howl. The sound enveloped the house banging the door and making the crooked wood of the windows clap their hinges.

Ayanwale ran into a room for safety and out of fear. She sat in a corner and curled up in a ball, tears spilling uncontrollably from her eyes.

“This is the end,” she thought to herself.

“Apeke”

In total shock, she raises her head up slowly. Only one person calls her that.

“Apeke is that you?”

The last person she ever expected to see. Ayanfe.

PART FOUR

“Isn't this Ayanwale's clothes” two villagers about Ayanwale's age on their way stream screamed, alarming other villagers including Ayanwale's parents.

It was daybreak and the villagers gathered round to see what was happening. Some out of concern, others for entertainment.

Ayanwale's mum cried out in agony as she held her daughter's clothes, rolling on the floor. All she did was shout "No" as she kept rolling and crying.

Falling on his knees with his fist on the ground, Ayanwale's dad muttered under his breath with tears threatening to spill from his eyes, "I won't let this happen again, not this time."