

## The Temptation of the 90's

The familiar scent of Mr Biggs's meat pie wafted to me opposite the street. I swallowed hard. I was hungry. *Don't eat anything in the 90s. We don't know what that would do to you.* Philip, my partner, advised. I was surviving on the chips that travelled with me back in time. The chips packed enough nutrients to keep me afloat but not enough onions to quell my desire for real food.

I hid behind a huge billboard that advertised toothpaste, my eyes trained on the plaza that housed Mr Biggs and many other offices, waiting for him, the mini-me, to emerge. I had watched him walk in, surveying his surroundings before climbing the stairs to the second floor where Mr. Okoye has his office. Things were going according to plan. I swiped at the insect buzzing in my ear, my thoughts going to the time machine sitting on the roof of the barricaded, uncompleted, two-story building on the street where I grew up. Its invincible feature hid it from view, and the steady beep of my wristwatch told me everything was alright; no one had entered the building. It relaxed me. I hoped things remained steady and nothing would trigger it to beep rapidly. That was a surefire indication that my cover was about to be blown.

Exhaustion began to creep up on me, and I stooped for some seconds, breathing in and out slowly. This wasn't a task for a 77-year-old man. I could have delegated someone, a person who did not need to wear the visage of a thirty-two-year-old man, in order to communicate with my younger self without him feeling schooled or pressured to limit his words. I had wandered my childhood home, touching pictures, smelling clothes, remembering easier times, my eyes misting over the passage of time. Experiencing my younger self introduced a new appreciation in me. I saw how far I'd come, the changes time wrought on me, and the strength of my perception. I have spoken to him twice now, and his mind surprised me. He didn't cower while speaking. He communicated his thoughts and listened attentively, ready to learn. How did I miss that growing up? My insecurities overwhelmed my senses, and all I saw in me were my faults. The loopholes, things that needed to be fixed.

I struggled with not telling him who I was. I wanted to reach out and tell him not to worry. To introduce myself properly, hug him, thug on his cheeks, feel his hair, his warmth. But I restrained myself. *He shouldn't know who you are. You're not supposed to exist in the same timeline as him. His knowing might kickstart a chain of events that would rock today's world.* Phillip said. Phillip's caution wasn't new to me. But he somehow had anticipated the shock of experiencing living outside yourself that he had to drum it in.

I had a chip engrained in me to help focus my priorities. It reduced my yearnings and my emotions and sharpened my focus. It was a necessary precaution. I needed to convince him to get the shares for Adjiate Cement before they sold out.

I already laid the groundwork yesterday at The View Restaurant and the day before at a cyber cafe as he researched animes. We connected over that. I regaled him with tales of the anime Demon Slayer. It wouldn't come out for another fifteen years, but he didn't need to know that. He listened with rapt attention, his interest piqued "Unfortunately, it's only available in the US. You can't find any information on it online." I finished, telling the fib without blinking twice. He groaned, biting his right index finger and flipping it with regret on missing out on a great show. I quickly looked at my wristwatch and winced. He caught on to the looks meaning; I had to go. "I have to go back to work. You're a bright young man, meet me at The View for lunch tomorrow by 12. Let's talk more there." I proffered my hand, and he shook it exuberantly. I will be there. He was, and we spoke more of anime.

"You're the first older person I've met who's into animes. I wish they would show these programs in Nigeria. Several people have told me about animes I would enjoy that play only in the US," I laughed.

"That's not the only thing you're missing out on. Anime is great, but the world has so much more to offer. And it's all within reach if you're ready to do something about it." I could see the question in his eyes, his face scrunched up in anticipation of the tips I seemed to have "it's simple, investments."

"Investments?" He drew back, disappointed. "Am I not too young to get into that? I don't know anything about it."

I smiled, "You're never too young to start. What you need is the right mentorship and connection." I waited a while before asking, "Do you have older people around to talk about finances?"

"No. My uncles stay far away, and my dad is not always home." That was true. I had factored that into my strategy. "Does he help when he's at home?"

"No, he doesn't. He thinks I'm too young to worry about money. He wouldn't let me get a job, either." I remembered that much. Father was scared of what the world would turn me into if I was allowed to explore that early in life.

"You're a good child. I can see you're very respectful and intelligent, and I want to assure you those qualities will get you far." He smiled. Thank you, sir.

"What would you do if I gave you N30,000, now?" his face lit up, quickly doubling down to distrust. "I would probably save it." That was a safe answer and untrue. I figured he would use the money to get a new PlayStation. I laughed. "Something tells me you would use the money to buy games." he grinned mischievously.

"No, sir. To be fair, I would not know what to do with that much money."

I laughed. "True. I figured you wouldn't. I won't trust you with that much money, but what I can do is point you in the right direction. Do you have money to invest?"

He shook his head negatively, "No, but I'm interested in knowing. I feel Mom can help me if I explain what it's for." I had factored that in, too.

"Do you know of Adjianto Cement?" he shook his head again. That was expected. "About an hour ago, they went public. Anyone can get their shares for as little as 20kobo." He stared blankly. It wasn't working. I went for more clarity.

"The thing about shares is they rise." he nodded. "If you buy shares with a strong company at a lower percentage, chances are the shares would rise and make you a nice tidy profit. Adjianto Cement is not so well known, but they are on the precipice of rising. It's a good time to buy their shares." I brought out a card and gave it to him. "This

is a consultant in Ogidi, Mr. Okoye. He's brilliant and would help guide you in the stock market." He took the card, turned it around and peered at its contents.

I continued, "It's great your mom is there for you. Give her this card and go with her to the man's office. He would provide a lot more information than I can."

"What if she disagrees?"

"Don't wait for time to move mountains before you put things in place for yourself. Visit Mr. Okoye. He's honorable and won't disregard your questions because of your age."

His eyebrows shot up, "Oh, he won't?" I nodded. "You don't have to have millions to invest. Every penny counts. The point is you're taking charge of your finances and learning all you can at a young age." That cemented the deal.

It's been three hours since he walked into the office. The sun was out in full force, sucking up every moisture and stilling the wind, making the weather unbearable. The billboard was not offering more shade. I had considered going, but I needed to know the outcome of the meeting.

I almost missed him when he came out. One minute I was staring at the building; the next, I saw him flagging down a taxi. I checked the time, thirty minutes before we met at the cyber cafe in Nkpor. It would take him that long to get there, too. I prompted my watch, communicating my next destination to the time machine. A portal opened behind me, zinging with cackling blue energy. It looked like it would electrify one to death, turning matter into lightweight, but it was all for show; it was completely harmless. I walked into the portal, materializing at the backyard of the cyber cafe.

When he walked into the cyber cafe, he smiled broadly, saying, "I'm in. "

