

AN EXCERPT FROM
THE MADMAN AND THE
DRUNKARDS

CHARACTERS

WUNI ADAMS a university professor

LAMISI his wife

BUGRI, NAAMA AND MANBORIBA his children

DEWAA Bugri's friend

OFORI MENSAH a journalist

LAWYER EFO Adams' lawyer

BRIGHT AMOAH a radio presenter

AMA a TV presenter

NII OSOM a journalist

KWESI AND DELA PhD students

NDOW, MAWUSI, AMANI, AMIN AND KWAME community members

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND YOUTH

THE CROWD

ACT ONE SCENE 1

[Professor Wuni Adams is about fifty-one years old, bearded with unkempt hair. He is a writer and a university professor. He is very slim with bushy hair and moustache. He's good looking, very humorous and a controversial family man. Next to him is his gorgeous wife, Lamisi, with their last born Bugri. Bugri has two other siblings who have gone to England for studies. Prof and his family chat in their hall; a modest three-bedroom self-contained house decorated with flowers in a modern style.]

LAMISI: My husband, did you say you don't trust me?

PROF.: Why should I trust you, my wife? My own shadow leaves me when I'm in darkness. Even the eye that sees everything— can't see itself. And you want me to trust a human!

LAMISI: *[stunned and freezes.]* But I love you so much and you know that.

PROF: *[smiles and heaves a sigh of relief.]* Hmm! Human love is worse than senseless things. People are hard- hearted, cruel, yet they can promise anything. I don't trust them.

LAMISI: You just said you trust me, I know you do.

PROF: Did I say that? Sorry, I didn't mean it.

LAMISI: Are all the professors in this world like this?

PROF: *[Laughs.]* Oh yes! They are noble, wise, valiant, loyal, plucky and very calm. Have you ever met any of them? They are people you can never trust.

LAMISI: *[Gestures to her son and speaks.]* Prof, I don't understand all these things you are saying. But I want you to know that you're that ray of hope in my abysmal existence; the whole world does not matter to me when you're in my bosom.

PROF: *[Chuckles.]* I know not what you mean by that. If the whole world was blind; how many people would you impress?

LAMISI: Only one person.

PROF: Oh, I see!

BUGRI: *[Admires his father.]* Daddy, does that mean I should never trust anybody?

PROF: *[Stares at son]* I'm firmly lodged in the trauma of memory. You're old now. You can think that for yourself.

BUGRI: I'm just in my freshman year in the university. I need your guidance.

PROF: *[Smiles.]* The veil of delusion that the world has thought about trust is falling like a filthy rug, soaked in blood. Now, let me tell you son; people who want you to trust them are trying to manipulate you in your darkness and gullible state. It's a deliberate ploy to achieve self ambition. People will ask you to trust them; after trusting them, then they will sting your ear. Son, I can't tell you not to trust anybody, but don't trust yourself.

LAMISI: *[Stunned with mouth open.]* Hmm! This is getting interesting. What exactly do you mean, dear?

PROF: What I mean is that when you were not married to me, you didn't trust casanovas riding on the crest of love. But I remember so well telling you I loved pretty women well-endowed in the bust region and with hips. So I did my best about roach crawling on the wall.

BUGRI: There's no communication. I don't understand anything.

PROF: *[Bursts into laughter, puffing his cigar.]* Son, you need eleven degrees to comprehend me. You don't even have one, so you don't need any compensation from me. There is no way one would have eleven degrees without a touch of madness.

BUGRI: That sounds like a cheesy horror flick. Eleven degrees? That won't make me rich, will it?

PROF: It depends. Which of the riches do you mean? We have the riches of the mind and the riches of the hand.

LAMISI: He wants money, not brains.

BUGRI: Oh yes! Riches of the hand is what I want.

PROF: You're an idiot. Look for riches of the mind. Cognisance, intuition, conscience, perception, impression, ideas are better than a billion dollars. The cognitive power can transform the world. It is a noema many don't comprehend, but that's because it is cleverly contrived. You said earlier that you don't understand me. Do you know why? Concepts which are theoretical without blatant practical applications, often with mystical connotations, are better understood by people of vast mind, but not physical cash.

LAMISI: Money rules the world, not knowledge.

BUGRI: The richest people in the world are school dropouts.

PROF: [*Stares at them.*] I'm not sure if I'm more shocked by this ignorance displayed in daylight. It's the mind of many black people, even, if they reside abroad. The bourgeois mentality is immolating our people. If the whole of our society becomes material gluttons, then chances are that fakers, frauds, perjurers, plagiarists, buccaneers, abductors, cross-border rapists and allied zoo inmates will thrive so well in their absurdity of making bucks—just to satisfy their narcissistic and egoistic wants.

BUGRI: Daddy, have you forgotten we are all not writers? You're being so verbose.

PROF: [*Momentarily baffled.*] Verbosity? You don't read. My son, read widely and you will comprehend every grandiloquent vomit; son, you've got to read my poems and letters. I create a poetic structure roomy enough to encompass the varied forms of the arts. You must work hard to become a professor like me.

BUGRI: [*Bewildered.*] Me? Hmm! Daddy, you want me to become a teacher?

LAMISI: Your son wants to be wealthy, not a professor in a university.

PROF: There is a positive correlation between one's level of education and one's financial status. The truth is that most professors reject material comforts. All the days of man in any generation have been the quest for wealth and power – only a few claim they search for God. But let's face the stark reality, even if your throne is coated in pure gold and inlaid with ivory, you will still die.

[Lamisi enters the kitchen to prepare breakfast. Father and son continue the discourse. A while after, she comes back to the hall and asks them to go to the dining room for their breakfast. With a terrific stare, Prof feels reluctant to step into the dining room. He orders his wife to serve him just where he is.]

LAMASI: Darling, it's better to eat in the dining room.

PROF: Who said that? Don't tell me where to eat my food. Go and bring it here as I read this letter these girls have sent to us. **[Prof reads the letter]** Good evening, Dad and Mum, we've made it safely by God's grace to the University of London at almost 4:00pm UK time. Indeed, from Amsterdam, we were unable to land at Humberside Airport due to poor visibility presented by fog or snow. For close to two hours without a change, we were then diverted to Manchester Airport. From there, a bus was organised to convey us to Humberside Airport. Over there, the bus that travels between University of London and the Airport had just left, on our arrival. But at last, we're in the University of London now in our room. We're sincerely grateful to you and mum. Our regards to Bugri. We promise to make you proud and would heed to every advice you and mum gave us, before we left Ghana. Thank you and God richly bless you. Yours daughters.

BUGRI: Wow! Thank God they arrived safely.

LAMISI: *[Shakes her head in amazement and goes to the dining room to bring Prof's breakfast.]* I'm happy for them. They should take good care of themselves.

PROF: Woman, make it fast, there's nothing in my stomach – except this smoke I have been inhaling since dawn.

LAMISI: Here is your breakfast; well served on a tray. Just for my one and only professor.

BUGRI: Mummy, where is mine?

LAMISI: Do you also want to eat yours here? If so, then go for it.

BUGRI: *[Nods his head.]* Yes, mum. *[He goes to the dining room to bring his breakfast. The family happily eat their breakfast together. They continue their conversation as they eat.]*

Blackout

SCENE 2

[A few months later, a journalist visits Professor Wuni in his abode. Mr. Ofori is about thirty-five years with well-trimmed hair and beard. He knows writers can sometimes be weird, but

Prof.'s appearance boggles his mind. They both sit in the lobby of Prof's abode. The interview begins.]

OFORI: Good morning, Sir. My name is Ofori Mensah. I work for the national newspaper. I'm here to have an interview with you.

PROF: Good morning to you too. What did you say you're here for? Sorry, don't mind me. I just forgot.

OFORI: I'm here to interview you.

PROF: Oh, oh ok! What is it all about? Am I in trouble?

OFORI: It's just about your life and job. You're not in trouble at all, Sir.

PROF: Hmm! You people always want to interview me. Anyway, I must confess now before you start. I lost my memory a few weeks ago. I hope that will not worry you?

OFORI: Not at all. Once you can remember a few things about yourself.

PROF: Please, don't ask me hard questions. I hate them. They can sometimes make you contradict yourself.

OFORI: Oh! Just simple questions about yourself and your job.

PROF: Ok! You can start now.

OFORI: Please, tell me about yourself.

PROF: My name is Wuni Adams. I'm seventeen years old. My parents are dead now, but my mother lives. I have many children, but only three are alive. I think I'm giving out too much information about myself. It's enough. What's the next question?

OFORI: *[Lost in thought.]* Please Sir, you said you're seventeen years old; but how can that be? Many would have taken you to be in your fifties. However, it's not possible, you can't be seventeen. If your parents are dead, how come your mother lives? Did any of your children die?

PROF: I don't know the answer! The question really struck me. It got me thinking about my whole existence – all my children are alive. Yes! I will be seventeen years in May.

OFORI: Please, may I know the year you were born?

PROF: I was born on 5th May, 1908.

OFORI: Isn't that outrageous? That will make you 107 years old. Sir, you can't be that old.

PROF: Do you know more about my life than myself? If you know that much about me, then why ask me these questions again?

OFORI: Sorry, Sir! When did you start writing and what inspired you to opt for writing?

PROF: I can't really remember now. If my son or wife was around, I'm sure they can still remember the year I started writing. But some political idiots inspired me to opt for it. I don't really like it, because my grammar is not good enough. Do you know that I was always the last in my class? *[Laughs.] It is a long story.*

OFORI: I don't understand you now, Sir. How can your son or wife remember when you yourself do not?

PROF: Gentleman, before this interview started, I told you I lost my memory a few weeks ago; but you insisted we have this interview. I don't understand you too OO!

OFORI: Sorry, Sir. Please, did you say you went into writing because of politicians?

PROF: When did I say that? This is what you journalists do to mar people's reputation. Oh yes! You see, you can't trust them. I actually wrote my first letter to insult the President. He didn't look like one, but you know, many illiterates and some foolish literates voted for him. He came to power through the barrel of the gun.

OFORI: Now I'm confused as to what to believe. You said first that they voted for him – now you're saying that he came by the gun. What really happened?

PROF: I don't know. Whatever happened wasn't my business. I'm a teacher and I don't meddle in dirty things like politics.

OFORI: Ok! Please, tell me about your family. And how do you manage them, especially with a career like writing.

PROF: Hmm! This question is really hard. But you promised not to ask me any hard questions.

OFORI: Sir, but this question is not hard. It's very simple.

PROF: Then, please answer it for me.

OFORI: That's quite funny, Sir. How can I have the answer to a personal question of that sort? I will be glad if you could tell me about your family.

PROF: Oh ok! It's an easy question. My parents died when I was only two years old. But my mother is now almost 90 years old. But trust me, that woman is still strong and healthy. Do you know that she still goes to farm? Hmm! These village people, I like their generation. It is not like now that nobody tells the truth, especially journalists like you.

OFORI: You didn't tell me about your children.

PROF: Oh, that! I have three of them. Two study in England. The boy is here with me.

OFORI: Are they as humorous as you? I mean witty and eloquent.

PROF: I'm flattered. How quick you notice a thing! My daughters are quite playful. They took it from their mum.

OFORI: I see. What do you think of today's politicians?

PROF: Nothing.

OFORI: Nothing? Writers like you know a lot and your advice can really help build this nation.

PROF: Is that meant to get me to answer that question?

OFORI: To some extent.

PROF: Hmm! They are illiterates. If they could humble themselves and go back to school – things will get better. There is a type of illiteracy that threatens us all. When people are illiterate, but decide to hide it; that's dangerous to our development. Their kind of politics ranges from humorous to disastrous. We the people need to face the stark reality that these men are truly illiterates.

OFORI: These are university graduates, Prof...

PROF: Who do you call an illiterate?

OFORI: People who can't read and write.

PROF: If that is your definition – then I'm forced to call you one.

[They both laugh. Prof... now crosses his legs. The interview gets more interesting.]

To read and write is easy. But these men can't learn, unlearn and relearn. If you can't do these three things you're an illiterate.

OFORI: Now, I know what it means to be a literate. So, what can they do to salvage us from this economic turbulence?

PROF: It's difficult to tell, because they are not even semi-literates. But if you insist I should advise them, I will do so.

OFORI: Yes, Sir! I insist with all due respect, Sir.

PROF: Is this the change the people asked for? The people asked for change, they gave them only 10% rate of fuel reduction. The people continued to ask for change, then they changed their cabinet ministers. That is stupidity if you ask me. They must commit to working to serve the people rather than themselves – they should close their domiciliary accounts and reduce their salaries.

OFORI: What do you think about women actively taking leading roles in politics?

PROF: Why do you want us to discuss women? Fear them when they are in the lead. A few are extremely humble – many will not even listen to a king.

OFORI: Why do they behave that way?

PROF: It's really nothing much. But whenever they go to a beauty salon to wash their hair, they wash their brains as well.

OFORI: *[Laughs.]* Really?

PROF: Oh yes! But some of them are brainiacs– they should be given the chance to also serve; I believe they can even serve better than some men. You know, women are caring.

OFORI: So, what do you teach at the university?

PROF: I have forgotten.

OFORI: You write novels, plays and poems?

PROF: Yes, I do.

OFORI: Thank you very much for your time. I wish to do another interview with you again. I pray by then you would have gained back your memory.

PROF: The pleasure is mine. You're always welcome. So far as you don't go out there and misquote me – I'm sure the next time you come here, my doctor would have finished working on my brain; so, it will be easy to have a more interesting interview.

[Prof writes poems in his solitude. His wife and son have travelled to the village. He writes a lot more when confined in solitude. He writes the poems with the mind of making a change in his society.]

PROF: *[Writes poems.]*

Insect world stops its incessant chatter

Then something strikes the trunk of the tree

In the intense darkness of the world

We howl and squeal in terror

We claw vainly in our quest to have wealth

Our quiver thrusts into a clouded moment

When our own saliva oozes from the corners of our own mouths

We bear the shame like deluded fools stifling a cry and mourn like gluttons

Our turban dagger, sword and charms ought to have made a great change

A change our ancestors craved for but never had

Does it strike a chord within us?
That the change we longed for never wants to show up
Finally, it's at hand, even though these heads loot state funds
In oligarchic cocoons and are beclouded
With the bourgeois mentality
We finally saw our own people bringing
Fame and honour to our nation in this arm and leg times.

[Prof reads over the poem he has just written and smiles. He continues to write other poems on the same day and time.]

That was quite great of me. I think I should title it "Insect world." It took me less than thirty minutes to coin that.

[He continues writing.]

Marriage is honourable
With the bed undefiled
But this I know, is moral,
Designed to make man pure
And free from the devil's manipulations
Sex out of it offers horror, grief, and despair
Destroys one's soul
Your spirit is you, your body is
Just the physical you and your soul
Is your mind and emotions
Sex before marriage kills your mental faculty
And makes you soulless
Marriage breakups are caused by
Foolish pride, inordinate self-esteem
And a sense of abhorrence with a presumptuous confidence
Pre-marital sex is a blasphemy
Mostly done cynically without remorse
By young people who have lost
The essence of their existence

And live in the nothingness of hope
Once experienced, can't stay without it.
Sex is good and fine in a proper
Marriage recognised by society
Love a woman, marry her
Before you sleep with her.

[Prof has just finished writing another poem; he reads over and continues to write.]

I will title this one "Bed undefiled". Let me write one more, then I can rest for the day.

[Prof writes.]

The ennui was a clam
Adhered in my existence
With rejected illusions of my time
Limited on earth
I died and was buried alive
My funeral was solemn
With tears of my mama
The only genuine tears
Pretended to be shed for a notorious son
My spirit, soul and body got scared
For the unknown
The devil had to beg on my behalf
I ran back, earth was boring
But the dead got jealous that I came back
I was full of happiness
That I got a second time
I brew myself for the good of humanity
I sinned but I wasn't the devil
I went up and rolled on the bed
I woke up
It was just a dream.

[Prof smiles and nods his head. He has just written his third poem for the day.]

He writes again.]

A woman of heavenly beauty
Who walks on earth
Earth treading star that
Makes dark heaven light
A beautiful flower in a vase with
Too much fragrance in its petal
Your beauty lessens my anguish
Your kiss is a gentle sin
Which smooths away my sorrows
Of love and life
Dreamers often lie
But this beauty is beyond dreams
Your love caught me like a spider web
Ripening my breath like a bought slave wallowing in pain
Flowers don't spread fragrance for themselves
Trees don't eat their own fruits
Rivers don't drink their own water
Love is like wind
You can't see it but you can feel it
It brings a golden glow to its beholder's face
It awakens souls and opens eyes
It is strong yet delicate
It pricks like thorn and disease with no cure
It is an illusion which only exists
In minds of people, a mirage many have struggled to reach
Many get disillusioned in the quiver of hurts
The ways of women are earthly and strange in love.

Blackout

SCENE 3

[Prof calls his lawyer and gives him his will in private. The lawyer opens it and reads what exactly Prof wrote in it in his presence. The will reads.]

EFO: *[Reads.]* My dearest family, death is not something I fear to talk or write about. It has now become a norm that every notorious man should have a will written down, since death is certain, but its hour is not known. My lawyer has talked about it many times – so I have decided to pay heed to his advice. This whole will thing has to do with my properties and sweat that I have toiled to acquire over the years. I have three children. Two daughters and a son. I have one wife and one mother. The extended family too is there – so how do you share my properties after my demise! Don't see it as something a blithering idiot wrote, but a genuine will of Professor Wuni Adams. I know it feels glad-hearted, refreshing and ravenous to have all my properties shared among you. You guys will be called in a cool grey dawn when beaded dew drops stand upon the grasses and trees to have my sweat given to you permanently. Without an atom's weight of mendacity or shadow of doubts – ants, spiders, cats, dogs, insects, birds and other animalistic creatures have nobody leaving behind anything for them; why should humans crave for these things? My stillness, solemnity, loneliness in the grave; that is if I change my mind on cremation – will not rest – if my properties are not given to orphans, the less privileged, widows and street children who need them the most.

In trying to discover the rhythms of geographies, cultures and human behavior, I found out that children relax to work hard, because of will. Except this very house we live in, all that I shall leave behind should be given to orphans, widows, street children and my mother. She is too weak to work now. I put you kids in the best schools and have given you the best books to read. Nothing of mine is yours when I'm dead. Use your education to take care of yourselves and mother. Thank you.

[Lawyer Efo is shocked with his mouth widely open. He nods his head and is still speechless after reading Prof's will.]

EFO: Prof., I think you must rewrite your will— you mean you are not leaving anything for your own biological children?

PROF: *[Chuckles.]* No! Hell no. I put them in good schools. There is a huge library in this house. They should make good use of it; this house is the only house I'm not giving out to the orphans or widows. They can stay here anytime they wish with their mother. But any other property of mine belongs to the poor, not my family. It may sound jabbering but that is my will.

EFO: Prof, there's a statutory law that seeks to ensure that widows, widowers and their children are not disenfranchised when it comes to inheriting property of their deceased spouses and parents. If your children decide to examine the provisions of the Intestate Succession Law, 1985 (PNDCL 111), that could support them obtain redress at the courts, if they want to. And if your wife, Lamisi, adheres to any advice of pursuing her case in court, the Intestate Succession Law, 1985 (PNDCL 111) would be paramount to her claiming her spousal property rights. Your children could also make a claim under similar Acts of the law if you write them out of your estate. In most of Europe and much of the rest of the world, a principle of “forced heirship” compels a portion of every estate, often half, to be distributed equally among the deceased's close relatives. If you think your child doesn't deserve a share; they get it anyway.

PROF: But I also know that adult children who are with adequate physical and mental capacity can be disinherited by a parent for one or more “just causes”. All I need to do is specify the particular just cause in the will in order to have the disinheritance enforced, which I've well written in my will with a pen, not a pencil. For my wife, Lamisi, she's a teacher and also takes salary.

EFO: Well, it's your decision; whatever you say, I'm at your service. But more people nowadays challenge the will of the deceased. People are only realising it slowly, but in these modern times and century, it means that you're no longer completely free to bequeath what you want to who you wish. After your demise, your children could allege that you were mentally fragile and under the influence of books when you disinherited them, which will make enough sense in the court of law. Your bases that you've given them quality education don't hold much water and your wife cannot easily be disinherited, considering all what she has done for your family. The love and affection she gives to you to have a peace of mind to work and make enough money for the family, only for you to write her out of your will. It won't speak well of you as a learned man. Prof, think about it. You must rewrite your will.

PROF: Good! Do your work. Anytime I have a change of mind, I will draw your attention.

EFO: *[Laughs.]* Thanks. I will take my leave now.

PROF: Good luck, my attorney. See you later.

[The lawyer puts all the documents into his briefcase and leaves the house.]

Blackout