

ROOM 315

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FADE IN:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

A neat and quiet place. No noise whatsoever, except for the soft and steady hum of gadgets. There are doors on both sides of the hallway, with room numbers on them.

We see "ROOM 301, 302, 303" etc, down the hallway. Then the silence is broken by footsteps, a single person walking through.

We follow the sound through to "Room 315". On the tag is "DR. STONE DEWALE, PSYCHOTHERAPIST". The footsteps stop, as if preparing to knock.

DR. STONE (V.O)

They come here every day: one session, one visitor. They come to talk. Sometimes I wish it was me doing the talking, not listening. See, it's hard.

We hear the soft CHIME of a doorbell.

INT. ROOM 315 - DAY

DR. STONE DEWALE, 50s, bald and bespectacled, sits in an office, writing in a journal.

The office is wide and serene: white walls, neatly arranged shelves and an organized table. On the table is a framed photo of Dr. Stone with a much younger woman. They look happy.

The doorbell CHIMES again and he pauses, distracted. Then he drops his pen and takes a deep breath.

DR. STONE (V.O)

Room three-one-five. My office for the last three years. I'm not a lot of things. I don't know how to measure my ability. I'm just the only one qualified to do this job in these parts.

FLASHBACK BEGINS:

INT. ROOM 315 - DAY - TRACKING

We see several persons seated in different positions. Dr. Stone's outfit changes with each patient to show passage of time.

1. EDWINA TAIWO, late 40s. Heavy makeup, yet sullen.

EDWINA

My name is Mrs Edwina.
(beat)
Edwina Taiwo.

2. REV. ADAM ATONYE, 50s. He has his clergy shirt on, but without a clerical collar, which sits on the table.

ADAM
Adam. Atonye Adam.

END OF FLASHBACK.

Doorbell CHIMES again.

INT. ROOM 315 - DAY

DR. STONE
Please, come in.

NINA, 25, walks in and sits opposite Dr. Stone. Her dress is really short but she seems used to wearing such. They look at each other for a long beat.

Then, as if controlled, she opens her bag and brings out five bundles of cash, placing them on the table one after the other, side by side.

She glares at the cash. Stone shifts in his chair, uncomfortable.

DR. STONE
Nina...

NINA
--Yes. Say my name. Nina.
Do you know why they call me that?

DR. STONE
Because it's your name, your name
your parents gave you?

NINA
Yeah, them. Just like they knew.
(beat)
You know, 'Nina' is a typical
pornstar name. I could list them if
you want - all the pornstars who
have that alias.

DR. STONE
Go ahead, Nina. But, calm down
please, you're too excited.

NINA
I know, Doc.

She pulls out a pack of cigarettes from her bag. Places one between her lips.

NINA (CONT'D)
May I?

DR. STONE
This is a health facility..

NINA
--It will help me get calm.

She lights up and drags, eyes shut.

NINA (CONT'D)
Today, I did something I've never done. I took a decision that will change everything.

DR. STONE
Let's begin with the money on the table.

NINA
This? I took it from Daddy.

DR. STONE
Daddy?

NINA
Daddy. One of my men. You know I don't call my father 'Daddy'. He's dead.

DR. STONE
You stole this money?

Nina studies him for a beat.

NINA
Would you call it stealing, when you take something you worked for?

DR. STONE
Did you work for this? All..this?

NINA
Yes Doc. That man fucks me three times in a day like I'm some sex toy. Sometimes I like it, I mean the whole thing. But, I can't take it anymore. It's so good it hurts.
(beat)
My mother would be proud of me.

DR. STONE
For sleeping with him?

NINA
No. For this.
(picks a bundle up and drops it)
This will show her that even if she treats me like a stranger, I'm her
(MORE)

NINA (cont'd)
flesh and blood. I am my mother's
daughter: a queen's princess.

(beat)
My mother made me whatever I am
now. She made me this.

DR. STONE
It was your choice.

NINA
You're correct, Doc. You should be:
that's why I pay you to listen to
me. I made the choice, but I was
pushed. Do you know what it means
to have parents, yet not have them?
A mother who you can't run to,
because she is too busy with your
father. A father that has never
spoken to you since you were a
child?

(beat)
I am a sad girl, Doc. I may have a
million likes on my facebook, have
wonderful skin and travel to Bora
Bora whenever I want, but I am a
sad girl. I am leaving this town,
this life.

DR. STONE
The money has to go back.

NINA
Too late, Doc.

Doorbell CHIMES.

INT. ROOM 315 - DAY

Time has passed. We know because only Dr. Stone sits now,
writing. The table is organized as before.

DR. STONE
Please, come in.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

We see Adam, in his clergy clothes but without the clerical
collar. He has it in his hands.

He walks into the room and the door is shut.

ADAM (O.S)
I've done bad things, Doctor.

INT. ROOM 315 - DAY

Adam is seated now, and his face is solemn. His collar rests
on the table. It is very calm.

ADAM

I've done very bad things. When I was in that hospital at Asaba, do you know what my job was?

DR. STONE

Abortion.

ADAM

Yes. Abortion. It is stupid how...

He trails off. His lips are moving, but we can't hear.

DR. STONE (V.O)

Sometimes, they tell you things they have told you before. Again and again, you have to listen to the gory details. Again and again, you have to imagine their actions while they describe it.

ADAM

...nurse rushed in and told me and the other doctor the police had discovered our hospital. The news came at a bad time. I was almost getting done with this young girl. But,

(beat)

I left her on that operating table and I ran. She did not survive.

Adam rubs his eyes, reflective.

DR. STONE

But you're remorseful. That is important, isn't it?

Adam chuckles lightly.

DR. STONE (CONT'D)

How do you know she did not survive?

ADAM

I see her everyday when I try to sleep. In the dead of the night. I see her on that table, white dress smudged with blood, begging me not to abandon her.

DR. STONE

If you have the chance, would you run away again?

Long beat.

ADAM

Yes, I will. I wanted to get peace of mind. I became a pastor. Three years as a student, five in practice, but nothing has changed. I have affairs with some of the ladies in my philosophy class in campus. There are some I sent into sin and their bloods are on my head. They have gone beserk: even more than I even imagined. All because I convinced, no: coerced them into an affair. I'm the cause. I'm the unfortunate catalyst which has to be removed.

They sit in silence. The soft hum of gadgets take over.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Can I have some water?

DR. STONE

(dialing on landline)

Of course.

(into phone)

Can you bring a bottle of water, please? Make it two.

DR. STONE (V.O)

I could judge my clients if I wish to. They pay me to listen, to heal their wounds through making them talk.

A YOUNG WOMAN walks into the room and places two bottles of water on the table. She leaves. Adam reaches for one and uncorks it.

DR. STONE (V.O)

I have secrets to tell too. Sometimes, I wish it was me doing the talking. But, who do I tell, you?

(focusing on us)

Can you keep silent? Can you listen and not speak, and not judge?

ADAM

I duped a man sixteen years ago, the other doctor. I saw him yesterday at the park. Our eyes met, just like that, and he looked at me: the man who took half his life savings and ran away.

(beat)

He couldn't say a word. He didn't move, to grab me and shout 'thief'. He just watched me walk away. Just

(MORE)

ADAM (cont'd)

like that. I will look for him. I will find him, and return the money adding all the arrears and inflation on it for sixteen years. The money is on my bed as we speak.

DR. STONE

You think it will settle the suffering he must have faced?

ADAM

What can I do? Do I go to the right, where there is nothing left; or to the left, where there is nothing right?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Edwina wheels a man on a wheelchair towards us. This man is TAIWO, 50s. They get to Room 315 and Edwina pushes the bell.

CHIME.

INT. ROOM 315 - DAY

Dr. Stone's water is still on the table, untouched. His eyes widen in shock as Edwina wheels Taiwo in. Taiwo's become saucer-sized too. Edwina doesn't notice the exchange.

She sits close, beside Taiwo, who is still glaring at Dr. Stone, although the latter has shaken himself back to reality.

Dr. Stone reaches for his water, subtly nervous.

EDWINA

I brought Taiwo today so you'll meet him. People think I'm still with my husband because he's rich. But it's not true. I love him. I mean, look at him, he's a lot to me. Everything to me.

Taiwo blinks.

EDWINA (CONT'D)

Look at him: he wouldn't cheat on me; he wouldn't come home late drunk, and beat me like my father used to; he wouldn't want to break up our home by taking a second wife, even if I can't bear more children. But, Doctor Dewale, these are not the reasons why I love him.

DR. STONE

Why then, Edwina?

EDWINA

After that car accident at Benin, Taiwo spent three years in a hospital. There was not enough to send him abroad, so we managed. After the coma, Taiwo woke up, a finished man. My Taiwo could not talk, could not walk, could not hear, could not move!

She starts sobbing. Dr. Stone watches her. It's a perk of his job. Taiwo blinks rapidly, oblivious.

EDWINA

But it was the same way I was: dead, as I lay in that hospital bed in ninety-seven. Taiwo saved me. I don't know how, but he didn't abandon me here. He carried me in his car, to his home, and saved my life, risking his.

(beat)

Then, he married me.

Edwina wipes her face now, careful not to smear her makeup. She is laughing now, sniffing, dabbing tears clean.

EDWINA (CONT'D)

He married me and made me his own, forgetting my past. A girl who came to abort her child, finding love in the wrongest of places.

(beat)

I love this man, because he changed my life forever.

She caresses Taiwo's hand. The bands on their wedding finger gleam.

DR. STONE

He loves you too.

Silence.

EDWINA

You know, he used to tell me a lot before this happened, like he knew something was coming to him. He told me how he was kicked out of medicine, unjustly; and vowed to practice, notwithstanding. With or without a licence. That was how he started that hospital at Asaba with another unlicensed doctor.

(beat)

Our daughter hasn't slept in the house for three weeks. no one knows where she is.. We have our

(MORE)

EDWINA (cont'd)
 differences, her and I; but she
 wants to win all the time. She
 lives recklessly, exactly like I
 did when I was her age. I love her
 and I'm always there for her
 whenever she needs me. I don't want
 Nina learning the hard way like her
 mother.

Silence.

She notices the photo frame on the table.

EDWINA (CONT'D)
 Your wife?

DR. STONE
 Yes.

EDWINA
 She's beautiful.

INT. ROOM 315/BATHROOM - NIGHT

We hear sounds of retching. It's Dr. Stone. For the first
 time, we notice he is on a wheelchair himself.

He stares at himself in the mirror and washes his face.

DR. STONE (V.O)
 We can't run away from our secrets.
 We may escape once or twice, but
 not every time. They're like
 shadows: sticking to us, visible in
 the presence of even the faintest
 of lights.

INT. ROOM 315 - NIGHT

Dr. Stone wheels in from the bathroom. He opens a drawer and
 pulls out an old academic photo.

We see a young Dr. Stone, on a wheelchair; Taiwo, standing
 behind him; and other MEN around them. They're in academic
 robes, mortarboards.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dr. Stone wheels out of Room 315, and away from us. A YOUNG
 MAN in hospital gear walks past him, greeting. He returns
 with a smile.

DR. STONE (V.O)
 Well, tomorrow is another day,
 isn't it?

FADE OUT.