



# THE DUST OF AMANFUL ROAD

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## The Dust

It was 1990 when Efua first stepped onto Amanful Road in Ketan. The earth beneath her feet was warm, reddish-brown and fractured like old pottery, dust rising gently with each step. The Atlantic breeze brushed against her skin, whispering promises she couldn't yet understand. Newly married to Kwame Mensah, the fisherman whose laughter floated lightly across the water, Efua settled into their modest home, a small structure overlooking the ocean at the mouth of Amanful Road.

The town breathed slowly back then, its heartbeat steady and predictable, its people interconnected by threads both visible and unseen. Efua walked daily, basket balanced on her hip, gathering quiet stories from each face she met.

Auntie Aba, the kenkey seller, was first to greet her each morning. Aba's loud voice and laughter carried warmth like sunshine, bouncing off the cracked walls of Amanful Road and pulling even the sleepest passersby into her orbit. Her kiosk was a small wooden structure, patched together from old planks weathered grey by salt air and time. The walls leaned slightly, as if tired but unwilling to collapse, held upright by stubbornness and a few crooked nails.

At the front, a wide, stained tabletop jutted out, worn smooth at the edges where years of customers had leaned, drummed impatient fingers, and counted out crumpled cedis. A heavy sheet of wire mesh framed the upper half of the kiosk, rusted in spots, its tiny squares just big enough to allow in the smell of hot kenkey but small enough to keep out most curious fingers.

Yet not everything stayed outside. The flies were a constant, noisy presence. They floated lazily in the heavy morning heat, their iridescent green backs

flashing briefly when they caught the light. They circled the bundles of kenkey wrapped neatly in layers of dark green leaves, buzzing softly like restless spirits. Some perched stubbornly on the edge of the enamel bowls piled high with hot pepper sauce, others danced above the sticky tabletop where the day's first customers had already left fingerprints smudged in spicy oil.

Aba's hands moved swiftly and surely between it all, scooping, wrapping, exchanging coins, never once missing a beat in her endless flow of conversation. Every movement of hers disturbed the flies for a moment, sending them into a frantic whirling cloud before they resettled, persistent as gossip.

Teacher Mensah would arrive around this time, his shirt still pressed, his leather sandals dusty from the walk. He leaned easily against the kiosk's splintering frame, exchanging a few coins for a steaming ball of kenkey, and lingered longer than necessary. Aba would tease him playfully, her

hands on her wide hips, tossing back her head in laughter so loud it startled the pigeons pecking at breadcrumbs nearby. Their small exchanges—shared jokes, quick glances, the way she always saved him the softest kenkey—wove a quiet, tender thread between them, unnoticed by the bustling road but obvious to anyone who watched closely.

Under the hum of the flies, the creak of the wood, and the sticky heat of the morning, Auntie Aba's kiosk stood as a living, breathing heart of Amanful Road—messy, stubborn, generous, and full of life.

Kwame Mensah was a friend of Teacher Mensah—they joked often about sharing surnames without blood relation. They'd grown up fishing together, until Teacher Mensah's education had pulled him ashore. Efua watched as her husband shared fish generously with Teacher Mensah, who shared stories in return, weaving a bond strong as nets they once cast together.

Young Nana Ama was Auntie Aba's niece, and she often stopped at Aba's kiosk before school. Efua remembered her clearly, bright-eyed and ambitious, braiding Aba's hair with practiced fingers, speaking dreams of owning a salon. Aba chuckled softly, proud yet cautious, warning her gently about the loneliness wealth could bring.

Nearby, Kofi Jomo, an elder beneath the old mango tree, often narrated ancestral stories to Nana Ama and Adjoa, the cheerful girl selling oranges. Both listened keenly, absorbing wisdom about community and kindness, which Kofi feared were slowly eroding under the weight of economic change.

As years unfolded, Nana Ama did indeed open her salon, painting it vibrant pink as the country embraced President Kufuor's era of liberalisation. Her success brought pride but also distance—her husband, Boateng, a preacher with rising ambitions, founded a church further down

Amanful Road. As Boateng's sermons grew louder, his visits to Nana Ama's salon became fewer, his attention increasingly fixed upon the prosperity gospel that fuelled his wealth but hollowed their marriage.

Pastor Boateng's congregation included Rahma, the owner of the busy provision shop. Quietly generous, Rahma supported many secretly, including Auntie Aba, whose health was declining, her kenkey business swallowed by inflation.

Rahma's kindness remained hidden behind shelves of goods and sorrow—a daughter, Amina, who had died young, her memory carefully concealed behind stacked cans and sacks of rice.

Efua's daughter, Esi, eventually married George, a young businessman and close associate of Pastor Boateng. George built their mansion just beyond Rahma's shop, the tall walls casting shadows over poorer neighbours, like Adjoa, whose cheerful orange-selling was slowly replaced by bitterness as her husband, Kwabena, the tailor, struggled to



provide amid rising costs. Kwabena often sewed clothes for George, stitching resentment into every seam, invisible threads linking their lives in uncomfortable silence.

Efua's son, Kojo, carried his father's legacy, fishing alongside men he had known since childhood. But when the sea took Kojo during a fierce storm, his death resonated along Amanful Road, touching everyone differently—Teacher Mensah wept openly beneath his neem tree, Rahma quietly prepared food for Efua, and even Boateng's church momentarily softened its loud sermons, mourning briefly before resuming calls for prosperity and donations.

The political currents shifted frequently, flowing quietly through Amanful Road. Elections came and went—Rawlings to Kufuor, Atta Mills to Mahama, then Akufo-Addo. Politics affected everyone differently yet similarly—promises rose, hopes fell, wealth remained uneven. Teacher Mensah's stroke coincided cruelly with Mills' death in 2012,

both mourned on Amanful Road beneath different trees.

By 2024, Efua sat bewildered outside Rahma's shop, election confusion swirling around her.

Posters in red, blue, green, and white covered every available surface.

Kwabena, stitching angrily, muttered, "Mahama again, or breaking the eight?"

Adjoa bitterly replied, peeling oranges roughly, "Breaking what? Only breaking our backs."

George, passing briefly, joked dismissively, "Vote won't change your empty pockets."

Efua turned to Rahma, voice confused, "Who won? Who leads us now?"

Rahma sighed softly, hands busy, eyes distant, "Maybe two presidents. Maybe none. Maybe just us."

Efua felt time folding upon itself, the dust rising from her feet carrying whispers from past elections, past disappointments, past hopes, all indistinguishable. History repeated itself endlessly, as predictable as waves returning to shore.

As she resumed her slow walk, memories intertwined like threads, binding Amanful Road's stories closely together. She passed the empty space of Auntie Aba's kiosk, hearing laughter long faded. Nana Ama's lonely salon whispered silent heartbreak, Boateng's church echoed empty promises, Kofi's mango tree hung heavy with forgotten stories, Rahma's hidden grief persisted quietly, and Esi's mansion stood cold behind high walls.

Efua continued walking, her slow footsteps softly stirring the familiar red dust along Amanful Road. Each step was gentle and cautious, her bare feet hardened by decades of contact with rough earth, soles cracked deeply like the dried clay after long harmattan seasons. Her skin, once smooth and

lustrous, had gradually folded into countless lines, a map of silent endurance etched deeply around her eyes and mouth. Her hair was now thin and silvery, wisps of it caught in the breeze, lifting gently like threads pulled loose from an old cloth.

Every morning was identical to the last. Efua rose from bed, wrapped her faded cloth tightly around her thinning waist, and stepped out to repeat the quiet journey she had made each dawn for thirty years. Her movements were deliberate and slow, mechanical from habit rather than conscious thought. She moved without expectation, without urgency, without questioning why the path remained unchanged or why each day mirrored those before it.

Her life had become a quiet repetition, a long stretch of waiting without recognising she waited for something at all. She greeted neighbours softly, her voice reduced to whispers over the years, her eyes kind but distant, carrying a sadness she herself did not realise she held. The kiosk she

passed, Aba's voice echoing faintly in memory, the scent of kenkey lingering even though the wooden structure had long since sagged and decayed, wire mesh torn and flies thicker than ever, swarming lazily over nothingness. Efua barely paused to remember; it was simply there, a detail lost in the monotony of her existence.

Her bones ached continuously, a dull reminder that time had slowly taken her strength, her youth quietly stolen by the gentle passage of mornings identical to this one. Efua did not reflect on her past nor did she think of the future. Each day was her entire world, isolated and complete, an endless present without beginning or end, the slow repetition subtly concealing her yearning for rest, for quiet freedom, for the gentle relief death might eventually offer.

Yet around her, life continued quietly and intricately, each neighbour's sorrows and joys delicately linked, rising and falling, unseen by Efua. She walked slowly through it all, living her

life without knowing she was living, each breath gentle and shallow, each movement slow and automatic. The soft dust embraced her ankles tenderly, rising softly around her feet, carrying secrets and connections Efua did not seek to understand. She was simply there, walking forward, quietly waiting, as she had done every morning, unaware of the quiet significance she carried along Amanful Road.

