

THE  
BILLIONAIRE  
WITHIN

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WALE AKINYEMI

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YOMI

Without a vision of where  
you want to be you will be  
trapped in where you  
have been.

# CHAPTER 1

Yomi was the kind of guy that you could easily overlook. He seemed aloof, lived in his own world and seemed to be governed by a different reality from the rest of the world. He believed he had the answer to the problems of Africa. He was so confident that in his own world many considered him to be

a very arrogant young man. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Yomi was a very grateful young man who had been raised by strict parents. His father was a medical doctor while his mother was a biologist. They believed in hard work and integrity and they subscribed to the philosophy that all work and no play would make Yomi successful. His childhood memories do not include going away to fun places with his parents. He did remember however that whenever he heard his father's car in the drive way as a child, he would quickly put off the television and bring out his books. In those days, the black and white television sets however had a tell-tale sign. It was a white spot at the centre of the screen that lingered for minutes after the television had been switched off. This white spot always got Yomi into trouble with his dad as it revealed that he had been watching television. Television was only for a few hours on Saturdays and Sundays and the whole family watched together.

Yomi's mother was a biologist who was as dedicated to her work as his father was to his patients. Both of them were avid readers and so there were books everywhere. She was also an extremely strict person who gave her all to her work. This was the very thing that confused Yomi. Here were two extremely hard working parents who hardly had time for any other thing apart from their work yet they just had enough. They were not poor by any means but they did not have the extras of life. They lived in a house that was provided for by his dad's office and though he was sent to the best schools, he couldn't help but compare his parents to others outside. Here were two

people of great integrity who worked very hard to get just the basics. However, when he looked at Dayo his friend, Dayo seemed to have it all. His parents were very comfortable and quite often he would go to the airport from school on the last day of the term. Spending holidays in England was for him the rule and not the exception. Dayo's parents had a car and a driver designated for taking him anywhere he wanted to go. He would recount stories of going to the golf club with his dad. His parents allowed him to go to parties and along with other friends whose parents also allowed to go to parties, they always had all sorts of stories to share on Monday when they all met in school. Yomi was the odd one out. All he had to talk about were the few hours he spent in front of the television with his parents but there was no way he was going to let anyone know this.

Yomi saw other friends with backgrounds that were similar to his background; react against this perceived disadvantage (of having parents who would give them no breathing space) negatively. Some of them reacted by taking to crime and were extremely wild and rebellious. Yomi was rebellious but did not venture into crime. However, when he saw two of his close friends die – one from an overdose of drugs and another from a drug-induced car wreck, he decided that there were better ways to rebel and he resolved that success for him would be the sweetest form of revenge against the system.

His parents though extreme hard workers, were the way they were because they were employees whose salaries were fixed.



Their pension was fixed and their financial standing in the next twenty years could be predicted with a certain degree of accuracy – yet they worked so hard. Yomi noticed that the children who seemed to have more liberal parents were those whose parents were business owners. There just seemed to be a different philosophy and way of thinking that existed among the employees and the business owners. Olu was another one of Yomi's close friends and his parents were business owners. One day when Yomi visited Olu he met his Olu's dad. "What a charming man", Yomi thought to himself. The man actually sat down with them and had a conversation with them for a few minutes. Yomi was not used to this and did not know how to behave. He had never had a sit-down with his father before. Olu's father asked Yomi a question that no one had ever asked him before in his life. "What is your vision for the future Yomi?" Yomi stared at him not knowing what to say. Sensing that he was at a loss for what to say, the older man put his hands on Yomi's shoulders and said, "It's alright. Just remember that whatever you do, do not settle for less than your vision". Yomi was awe struck. Not only did these people think differently, they had a different way of relating with their children!

A few months later it was his friend Olu's fifteenth birthday, and all the boys were hanging out together in the common room in school when Olu was called to the office. There was a message from his father. Olu left happily telling his friends to wait for him. When he returned, he had a huge smile on his face. His father had sent a driver and Personal Assistant to give Olu his birthday present. In the envelope, was a hundred dollar bill!

Yomi could not believe what he was witnessing. One hundred dollars! He wished his parents were present to witness this. He remembered how when his aunt was going to the United States and needed some dollars, he had recommended a friend called Joseph. When Joseph came home, Yomi's parents interrogated him like he was a thief. In their minds, a teenager could not have dollars on him expect he came by it in some dubious way. "Where did you get this money from? Who gave it to you? Are you sure it's not fake?" The poor boy went through so much interrogation that he left with his money and never returned to Yomi's house after that. Now, here was another friend's father sending him one hundred dollars for his birthday!

He remembered Dayo also showing him a check that his dad had given him for his birthday. Yomi was amazed. He thought checks were things that big people used to transact business. Now, here was a fifteen year old being given a check by his own father! Yomi was further shocked when he privately asked the two friends what they intended to do with the money. They both replied that their parents had a special fund set up for them and that they were putting all the money they got into this fund. Yomi couldn't believe this. These boys were set for life. He looked at other children that were not from wealthy backgrounds and discovered that they were the biggest spenders of the day. It was such a contradiction. Those who had means did not spend. Instead, they put the money to good use in a place that would ensure that the money increased but those who did not have were bound by a hand-to-mouth way of living.

Yomi discovered that there was a level of trust and exposure that business owners seemed to give their children that employees like his parents did not give their children. For instance, they could travel abroad by themselves at a young age. Yomi on the other hand could remember when one of his uncles was traveling abroad. Even though the uncle was in his late twenties, the whole family followed him to the airport and he had to be taken by another uncle who was more exposed! Yomi's friends who were children of business owners also talked different. They talked of playing pool at the club or going to play golf with their parents. All this was foreign to Yomi. His parents had absolutely no time for anything other than work and they certainly had no time for any activity with their son.

Little did Yomi know that all these things were shaping his philosophy and belief system. He had now come to a place where he vowed never to be an employee. He had seen what employment did to his parents and he had seen the life on the other side. He had seen the life of his friends whose parents were successful business owners and he decided that this was the kind of life that he wanted for himself and the kind of environment that he wanted his children to one day grow up in. His background had shaped the course of his destiny.

Financial success is not a  
respector of your social  
background. We live in a  
world where paupers have  
become billionaires and  
peasants presidents.