

GIVE A SMILE

by

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FADE IN:

INT. CORRIDOR - COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - KABALE TOWN - DAY

A scream.

Three ER nurses pin ABA, 13, barely clothed, against the wall. She thrashes. Kicks. Bites.

NURSE SARA, 35, forces Aba's jaw open and pours thick, dark liquid from a plastic bottle down her throat.

NURSE SARA

Swallow it! Now! Or it'll burn your lungs!

Aba bites hard. Nurse Sara yelps in pain. The bottle slips.

SPLASH! Thick, dark liquid explodes across the nurses' crisp white uniforms.

DR KEMBABAZI MPAKA (DR KEM), mid-40s, storms in, wearing her PhD graduation gown and cap over blue scrubs and red Crocs, stethoscope swinging wildly. She snaps on gloves.

NURSE SARA

It's Aba. Drank rat poison. Forty minutes ago. Won't let us near her.

DR KEM

New bottle. Now.

Nurse Sara sprints off.

Dr Kem steps forward. Gives Aba a smile.

DR KEM

Look at me, Aba. Just me.

Aba's chest heaves. She glances away, still fighting.

Dr Kem wipes sweat from Aba's brow with a gloved thumb.

DR KEM

I'm Dr Kem. Breathe with me.

Aba glances back. Meets Dr Kem's smile.

DR KEM

Slow. Like this.

Dr Kem takes a slow, deep breath. Holds it. Exhales.

Aba mirrors her, shaky. The nurses loosen their grip.

DR KEM

Good. Now tell me, what happened?

Aba glares at the nurses, then back at Dr Kem. Lips tremble.

She says nothing.

Dr Kem turns.

DR KEM
(to the nurses)

Space.

The nurses step back. Reluctant.

Dr Kem takes Aba's trembling hands.

Aba's eyes catch a faint scar across Dr Kem's wrist.

ABA
Uncle... at night. When everyone
sleeps. I bit his lip. He bled.

Dr Kem's fists clench, then soften.

DR KEM
Have you told anyone?

Aba shakes her head, tears spilling.

ABA
No one listens.

Dr Kem pulls her into a tight, protective hug.

DR KEM
I'm listening.

Nurse Sara returns with a fresh bottle. Without letting go of Aba, Dr Kem takes it.

DR KEM
This is charcoal mixture, Aba. It
will pull the poison out. Drink it
with me.

Dr Kem tips the bottle.

Aba's small fingers wrap around Dr Kem's hand.

Together, they tilt the bottle. Aba gulps it down.

Dr Kem checks Aba's pulse. Nods sharply.

DR KEM
(to Nurse Sara)
Get her to the bathroom. Then admit
her. Call Child Protection Police
Unit. I'm needed at the University.
My phone's on.

Nurse Sara takes Aba's hand, leading her away.

Dr Kem leans against the wall for a moment. Alone.

She rips off gloves. Sprints out, gown flying behind her.

INT. GRADUATION TENT - KABALE HILLS UNIVERSITY - LATER - DAY

A colourful sea of GRADUATES, stylish GUESTS and uniformed STAFF fill the rows.

One front-row seat is empty.

Vice Chancellor ZAC MPAKA, 50, imposing in full regalia, stands tall at the podium.

ZAC
(into mic)
...go out there and change the wo--

The side flap of the tent snaps open.

Zac stops mid-sentence. Every head turns as:

Dr Kem dashes inside, graduation gown over scrubs, Crocs slapping, stethoscope bouncing.

ZAC
And there's my wife. Always on her
own schedule.

The crowd laughs. Zac doesn't.

Dr Kem hurries towards the empty front-row seat.

BUZZ! Her phone rings from her handbag.

She cringes. Zac's eyebrow shoots up.

ZAC
Again?

The ringing continues.

She fumbles in her handbag. Silences it. Sits.

Zac clears his throat.

ZAC
Ladies and gentlemen, as I was--

PING! A text vibrates loudly.

All eyes, including Zac's, turn to Dr Kem.

She mouths "sorry", eyeing the screen.

SMS from COMMUNITY HOSPITAL reads:

'ABA. PULSE WEAK. COME NOW'

She hesitates for half a second, glancing at Zac.

She rises, head bowed, and slips out.

EXT. HOTEL GARDENS - KABALE TOWN - LATER - NIGHT

Music. Laughter. Flashing cameras. Popping champagne.

Graduation parties spill across the gardens.

In a quiet corner, away from the joy, Zac sits alone, tie loosened, a bowl of picked-clean bones in front of him.

He checks his phone - 9:09 p.m.

Dr Kem rushes up, still in scrubs and Crocs, gown trailing.

DR KEM

Zac, a girl. Thirteen. Tried to end her life. Her uncle --

ZAC

My mother gave her life to that hospital. Died at forty. I can't ...I won't watch you do the same.

Dr Kem sits. Zac slides his phone across the table to show her glossy photos of a pristine, modern hospital.

ZAC

London International Hospital. They have an opening. For you.

She rubs her eyes wearily. Doesn't even look at the photos.

DR KEM

I heard.

ZAC

Then apply.

DR KEM

They need me here.

ZAC

(a cold laugh)
Who? That girl who tried to die today?

Poppers explode overhead, showering them in red and gold confetti.

Zac leans in, voice low.

ZAC

Take the London job, Kem.

A waiter sets a decorated cake and knife before Dr Kem.

WAITER

For the graduate.

BUZZ! Her phone rings again in her handbag. Their eyes lock.

Dr Kem pulls the phone out: COMMUNITY HOSPITAL.

She doesn't answer. Places the phone on the table's edge.

It keeps ringing. She hesitates, then stands.

DR KEM

I have to go back.

ZAC

It's your graduation dinner, Kem!

One night. Just one. Let them...

(phone stops ringing)

...handle without you.

She touches his arm, pleading.

DR KEM

Drive me. Please.

He pulls his arm away, jaw set like stone.

She runs.

He watches her disappear into the crowd.

The waiter moves to clear the untouched cake.

ZAC

(to waiter)

Leave it.

The waiter nods. Retreats.

Zac digs his fingers straight into the cake - no knife.

He takes an angry bite, icing smearing across his lips.

Dr Kem's forgotten phone slides off the table's edge.

It lands into the grass, lighting up with another call.

He chews, staring at the BUZZING screen.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - COMMUNITY HOSPITAL - LATER - NIGHT

Aba lies still. Deathly still. Eyes rolling back.

Nurse Sara shakes her.

NURSE SARA

Aba! Breathe!

Aba's head lolls to the side - like it's about to fall off.

... 5 of 103 pages.