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The Ace of Spades in disarray

*English version drafted by Philippe G. Bonkounkou
(Burkina-Faso), and edited by Saeb Zaidi (Pakistan),
with the author's assistance*



Edilivre

Special thanks

I am particularly thankful to respected Colonel Saeb Zaidi (Pakistan). Without his profound support in editing, this English version would not have been achieved.

My gratitude is extended to Captain Philipe G. Bonkounkou of Burkina-Faso, who has drafted this English version.

Dedicated to

Burkina Faso, the country of honest people.

To deceased people

My Father Zoungrana François.

My uncle Tapsoba Emmanuel.

Professor Kpoda Damien.

Cadet officer Kaboré Privat.

Captain Bâ Djibril of Mali.

May all your souls rest in peace to

My brave mother Ouanda Falenga Félicité, long life to you.

My loved wife, daughters and sons,

My elder sister Méline,

My elder brother Mathieu,

My younger sister Noélie,

Professor Niampa Seydou

My teacher Lamine Ouédraogo

My teacher Augustin Bonkounbou

*All my teachers and professors in military school
Major Maiga Attaher of Mali,
All officers and men of Burkina Armed Forces
All officers and men of Defense and Security Forces
All my friends, colleagues and relatives
Thank you sincerely, for your friendships and support.*

Chapter One

In the City of Cashew

The year 1975, without anyone having thought of keeping track of the exact date this began, was marked in Messi Town, whose southern flanks float on the Atlantic, by the existence of a man no resident could forget. To some extent, disregarding rumours and speculations about him that troubled the tranquility of the whole country, coastal population was surely tormented to count among them, this strange individual. Businessmen, the youngsters, the elderly, sportsmen, artists, painters, circus amateurs, administrators, scientists, philosophers, psychologists, lost their minds in their deepest thoughts, trying to figure out and make sense of his profile.

First, how did this psychosis arise in the people's minds, and then, how did it reign?

Well! For some time then, in the City of Cashew, a

man had suddenly revealed his existence in so extravagant a way that it had arisen inhabitants' curiosity in the neighbourhood. In a strange manner, he went out of his house by foot to an entertainment or sports venue, spent willingly a moment there, then, soon after, left. He repeated this scenario, the exact same scenario, over and over, as time went by, with an accuracy that only a robot could have been capable of.

People could tell a lot about him, but, by fear of being wrong, they just described his impressive physical features and behaviour. He was a real tall man in height, worthy of Germans. Some said he touched basketball hoops just by rising on his toes. Truth or tale? Anyway, he defeated the record of highest heights in the capital.

With an elegant look of the most mystifying ones, difficult to describe, he was seen eager to impose it. He always seemed to have time by his side. His lifestyle and activities didn't seem anyhow, to care about time. One thing paradoxical and troubling is that he was never surprised, neither by time going by in his own life, nor by events which, by their nature and content, troubled people. Besides, in the City of Cashew, where he lived in building 2PI-RSDE, his manners were characteristic of a sniper's accuracy and regularity of a clock, according to inhabitants. Since his gait attracted too, the most fanatic of his personality came close to compare his elegance with the one of a very alert partridge, not in a mocking

way, but just to allude to his look, constantly high and straight forward when walking. The image of this man discreetly sneaked into people's minds.

He was not communicative. As per the average opinion gathered several times in his regard at the time – apart from shy assessments stating that he only disclosed the essentials in a day, and extremist opinions stating that he opened his mouth only for eating or drinking-, it could be agreed upon that, among all human beings on the earth, this man was the one who spoke the least, the one who, among a thousand things all essential to be said, would disclose none or, at maximum, would disclose only one, displease as it might whomsoever.

He had a teen face, despite his adult age. His complex looks, a blend of assurance and suspicion, gave the impression of a man forged by storms and tornadoes of life. Was he one of those who drive their success through multiple failures, thereby, stepping on the latter to achieve the former? Why such a measured behaviour?

For leisure, he loved basket-ball, playing pinochle, bowling, table pool, hunting. As far as alcohol is concerned, no one had ever seen him drinking. And the same went for women, as he had never been accompanied by or had never shared his life with a woman. No domestic servant. He only had a watchman, whom he barely addressed more than a word per day. Such a very enigmatic and complex

individual he was.

Very apt at gambling, he only spoke to himself whether he was winning or losing, as for to congratulate or make remonstrance. His partners and opponents always looked at him from the back, as if they required a certain license to look at him in the face. Was he tender, rude or nice? To comfort themselves, some finally said he was a “singular guy”. The zealous ones named him “The Baron”, never having the nerve to call him as such aloud. During their overnight get-togethers, the men enjoyed so much, talking about him that they didn’t realize time passing by. The entire youth of MessiTown were driven passionate by the mysterious looks of this individual. His popularity partly was also due to his skills in basket-ball, and city clubs bragged his outstanding performances. He was a real dunker. However, he never subscribed to any regular basket-ball club in town.

Every morning, the city rooster woke up at 5:32 am sharp, as though his life was precisely timed by the big clock against the living-room wall which, curiously, never sounded. As an answer to the curious, eager to seek the secrecy of this habit, the Baron only gazed at them fiercely.

According to his house watchman, the man was more than meticulous. From his bedroom to the living-room, he spent exactly 12 minutes: six minutes in the shower room, four in the dressing room and

two in the kitchen where he had his coffee. In the living-room, he spent seconds to check if the furniture was properly arranged, as if any reckless evil would dare change the arrangement. Besides, in addition to the big clock on the wall, there was a breakable-glass table surrounded by five cushioned chairs. No one ever heard, not even once, sound of a TV or a radio, better yet, ever suspected their presence. Was he averse to comfort? Disinclined to news? Those are the questions that the people who knew him, asked themselves persistently.

No one had a doubt about his richness; nevertheless he displayed no behaviour that could contradict his modesty. Within his “campus” – that is his house as people called it – were parked, as if aligned with a theodolite, about fifteen cars, the noise of whose engines could only be heard during maintenance hours. This man, with uncommon life style, answered to the name Azi Josué Marien, according to the registry office.

Seen from far, his house looked like a pension, given its standing; but, at a closer look, due to deadly silence reigning in there, it looked like a mortuary house. Inside, the life style of his owner was so quiet and disciplined that a stranger would think the house is unoccupied – especially, if his attention wasn't drawn by traces of the door rollers, opening and closing on a regular basis.

At the entry, was a man of about fifty years, who

never stopped caring about his uniform, sensitivity, gestures, feelings, the way he was standing. He was the watchman and was named Lou Bedi, a name temporarily useless for him, since his boss never used it to refer to or call him.

This house, given the fact that its features were not similar to other houses, was unique in the City of Cashew. According to anonymous whistleblowers, it cost nothing less than one hundred and fifty million francs. This house was different and singular, and, to explain how it aroused the curiosity of neighbours and the people passing by would require a drawn out description.

On this day, Saturday 1st March, the year 1975, the gentleman was ready to go out, dressed in a dark-grey velvet outfit. He emerged from his house at exactly 50 minutes past 7:00 am, to satisfy one of his inflexible habits: playing pinochle nearby. There, he joined a group of players. During the first game, he earned almost all stakes and clenched victory for his team. This impressed his teammate, who enjoyed the game more and more. When the clock sounded ten, Josué Marien stood up, walked up to his house and immediately locked himself in.

The first apparent activity of his day was done. How he spent the rest of his day could only be imagined by men who had special interest in knowing. So, did he spend the rest of the day meditating, doing household such as dish washing,

laundry, cooking; or else, was he reading a magazine or articles written to his taste. His watchman, the well-placed to know better about them, spent his time trying to figure out his boss' activities rather than focusing on security. He was permitted access only to the main gate and to the outer first third of the compound, and that too from 2 am to 10 pm, so that people believed that for the rest of the time Azi substituted for his watchman.

The Baron rarely spoke to his watchman. Besides, there was not much to tell him. When he wanted to communicate with or to task him something, he used gestures, and it was up to the watchman to understand what he meant. Sometimes, he would hand him out an envelope containing his pay cheque, or some instructions.

Azi was a shy man. Despite this impervious outlook, a certain pureness radiated from his person. His surroundings were more inquisitive about the fact that, to their knowledge, the Baron had no wife, no child, no brother, no sister. He seemed to have ties with no family in town. He lived in seclusion. He seemed to have fallen from nowhere.

On this 1st March 1975, it was 6:30 pm, and still the man with impeccable behaviour hadn't re-appeared from his house. The inhabitants of City of Cashew were converging on the city hot spots. The "Pinochle Club" was filled again with its usual fans, except the robot. The twilight bowl descended

gradually and melted with the city roofs, under the watchful eyes of the people. The daylight made itself scarce within the houses; city streetlights lit up and, as usual in the front and surroundings of Josué Marien's house, order, beauty, luxury, quietness and strangeness could be felt.

Thus, days and nights went by, without the city boy ever being distracted; in such a momentum that everyone doubted if ever any change would see him. People in town were so fed up with observing him in his inflexible habits and manners that they feared that they would die without ever understanding him. They were more and more confused, as days went by; the more they observed him, the more they discovered his accuracy, organisational skills, and incredible things in the life of a single man. And it was surely discomfoting.

However, Josué Marien did not apparently arouse this curiosity intentionally, even though his behaviour generated a rain of criticism and questions among the people. The man was stark punctual with his activities. He didn't waste any of his energy, didn't say more than what he decided to express aloud, didn't arrive a second earlier or later than planned. Overall, he resembled an automated robot. The man, given his attitude, was feared by some and resented by others at the same time. Those who tried to discover even the smallest secrets of his personality met with failure and frustration. His timetable, as regular as days and nights, seemed to be staunchly averse to change. Thus

remained the Cashewer unchanged and unmoved,
and surely indefinable for the inhabitants of Messi.

EXTRAIT

Chapter Two

Harivat and Raoul

In the eastern outskirts of Messi, was located a sports complex commonly called “Dunkers Club”. The youth of Messi gathered there in joy and in frenzy. The Baron always went there alone, jogging, and simply said “morning” to the players by waving his right hand, with a slight softening of his face, paying attention not to smile openly. He then joined the team. Without either calling his partners by their names, or speaking to the umpire, he led his team to victory every time he wanted to, and then, left the youngsters at Dunkers’ Club.

With his regular visits to this place, Azi couldn’t attract better than the attention of two young boys. This time around, given the way things were, we could bet he wouldn’t get away with it easily and his

identity would finally be known. The two youngsters were impressed by the Baron's personality. They had observed and admired him. They had taken his photographs, were informed about all enigmas his personality encompassed. The two basket-ball zealots often refused to play in order to observe Azi and quench their thirst to secure his friendship. They were Harivat and Raoul. They were relatively tall. Given their calm character, we could say they resembled to the Baron a little.

The two youngsters wondered how they could approach this gentleman without being spurned. That was where the main difficulty resided. One day, they said, when trying to approach Azi, they had bumpy feelings: fear, shivering, certain shyness mixed with muscle stiffness. This was the first time in their lives, and something strange, that they have shivered when about to address another human. They didn't know that one can be a king with no crown, no scepter, and no throne. Yes, Azi had never been crowned. Despite the fact that he was invested with no power whatsoever, he was "powerful". He had power over everything, like a king has. He was imposing with neither a solid background in the past nor a previous achievement. He seemed to have reached a place he neither planned for nor deserved. However, people refrain from saying he was a parvenu.

The two devotees had come to realize that it would take them longer than they thought to carry

out their plan. Not to deviate from their aim, they had seriously considered not to forget about any detail to achieve their ends. “Azi shouldn’t be approached either during his leisure time or at his leisure places”, they said to themselves. They should have been his relatives for instance, or at least should have had some good discussion topics to share together with him. But, actually, what good motive at the time could have brought together Azi and the two young sportsmen? The Baron was far from being a businessman. He was far from being an associate partner.

On a Monday afternoon, on a pub stage where he was having tea, Raoul proposed a real indecency: “We will send him an anonymous note over his house wall. Let us tell him that we have a wind of a conspiracy being hatched against him, and it is in his interest to meet us.” Harivat found this idea not so novel and inconvenient. The final objective was not to meet him, but instead, to be friends with him, which will not be met. “We would have committed a serious indelicacy”. The two associates then discussed over tea, without reaching any solution. However, their passion and determination were irresistible. The buddy team was convinced that every tunnel has an end, that their curiosity will be satisfied, their objective will be achieved.

On this same day, the 14th April, 1975, the two friends left each other when the clock struck 10 pm. In order to join his home located about two hundred