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"A Gentleman Does Not Refuse A Good Offer"

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9.4 "A Gentleman Does Not Refuse A Good Offer"

At the start of a six-week residential seminar, participants were asked to introduce themselves and the work they do. I introduced myself as a staff of the ministry responsible for works and housing, but in the housing department. Unknown to me, there was in the room a participant with an accommodation problem; the information I gave about myself exposed me, and she decided to exploit it.

One day, after one of our classroom sessions, this participant came up to me and wondered whether she knew me somewhere. She mentioned the names of towns where she thought we might have met. My negative responses did not put her off. Indeed, the questions had served as a basis for establishing some acquaintanship with me. Consequently, we started greeting each other whenever we met.

On another occasion, during a break, we happened to meet at the cafeteria where beer and other beverages were sold. For my newly acquired friend, the opportunity had come: She quickly came to me and asked me what I would like to drink. Remembering that on our initial encounter I had given negative answers to her questions, I thought if I refused her offer of a drink it would mar the cordial relationship developing between us. In any case I thought to myself: "*A gentleman does not refuse a good offer.*" And so even though I was not particularly thirsty, I asked for any soft drink. She ordered the most expensive soft drink available for me.

This woman then started searching for a good opportunity to corner me to unfold her difficulties to me as far as accommodation was concerned. The opportunity came when one day we found ourselves sitting at the same table during supper. She narrated the story surrounding her accommodation: the story was so pathetic that I could not do otherwise but offer to help. I, therefore, promised that I would get her an application form to complete as a first step to her acquiring a government bungalow. Encouraged by these few words, this woman would come whenever she saw me, to "say hello".

I managed to get the application forms for her to complete. She completed them and instead of handing them over direct to me, she put them in an envelope and deposited it in my pigeon-hole at the Porter's Lodge.

After a hard day's work in the library, on my way to the dormitory, I passed by the Porter's Lodge where an envelope was given to me. I opened the envelope in my room; it contained the completed application forms and forty thousand cedis. My reac-

WOODE, Samuel N., *"A gentleman does not refuse a good offer"*, in: Ethical dilemmas and moral temptations. Cases in Administration, Accra: Christian Council of Ghana, 1998, 82-84.

tion was that it was the work of Almighty God as at that time I was in need of money to satisfy some financial obligations.

I kept the money for my personal use and managed to get her the accommodation.

Questions which may be useful for discussion

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 - What examples from your working experience were you reminded of as you read this case?
 - Why did she not hand over the envelope to him, but put it in his pigeon-hole?
 - "A gentleman does not refuse a good offer" — what favours are acceptable or unacceptable?
 - What title would you give to this reading?