

THE NAKED TRUTH

CHAPTER 1

NEW DAY VENDING COMPANY,
NOVEMBER 29TH

Stephen Williams is hard at work at his company, New Day Vending Services. He is really working hard because December was the slowest season due to the fact that school was out and in the bulk of his vending accounts are with the schools. Although the slow season was bad it gave Stephen the opportunity to take the time to look at his business and be objective.

Things have not been going so well for the last couple of months. Business has really died off and students are not spending as much

money. He would of just imagine that out of the 600 vending machines that he had at the universities, colleges and the school district that he would be more profitable, but lately profits has been down. He was mystified as to how this could be happening. He had his sales team out there working and he had his staff out there filling up machines and he felt like he had the right products mix to satisfy the students snack cravings. The schools have been in a budget crunch and they had been asking him for commission payouts to make up the budget short fall which has been decreasing his profits. Had he had not made the proper adjustments to ensure his success?

Stephen was sitting there at his desk looking at numbers trying to figure out how he could best get the company back on track. Should he fire everyone and hire new people or should he revamped the product mix and try to get products in that people are more apt to buy. Should he in turn talk to the wholesalers from where he bought the products and see if he could negotiate with them to get a cheaper price so that way he would not have to raise the price of his products. He just wasn't too sure about what he should do

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he just wanted to make sure that whatever steps he took that they were the proper steps and that he was going to ensure the overall success of his company.

It had gotten so bad that he had started having problems at home. His wife of 2 years Eva had really been giving him a lot of problems because the company had not been performing well. Eva had decided not to work for the company because she didn't want to participate in any capacity. Eva was more of a home body and she enjoyed raising her son Nicholas. Stephen did all the work and Eva did all the spending and when she couldn't spend any money she became really upset just like now.

With all of this on his mind Stephen was trying to find a happy situation that would satisfy his desire to be successful in business and then in turn as the revenue rolled in keep Eva happy since that's the only thing to seem to make her happy was her being able to go out and spend money.

As he sat at his desk thinking about all of these different things he recognized that after this year he would be going into his 20th year of business. This business that he has started in high

school with one vending machine has now amassed to 1000 vending machines all across the city of Houston and he was a major player. He had received minority contracts with universities and colleges and with the school district which help him to build his empire. He had business with industrial accounts and he even had senior living accounts and they all paid and he was extremely happy and extremely satisfied with the result of that.

He was able to hire a lot of people from the ghettos that would not otherwise have a job. He took people that had criminal backgrounds and he had people that had drug problems in the past and he put them to work. He had nearly 200 of people to work for him and he paid them what he felt was an adequate and decent wage. He stood to lose all of it. What was he going to do, was he going to be able to fix it or would he have to let everybody go? So just then his assistant Vanessa came into his office and handed him a piece of paper.

“What’s this?” Stephen asked as he took the paper from Vanessa.

“It’s the final nail in the coffin Mr. Williams.” Vanessa said, as she sat in the chair in front of

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his desk.

Stephen scrutinized the piece of paper. It was the report that he has been waiting on from the accounting office that told him what his finances look like for that year and the projections for next year. As he looked at the piece of paper he became deeply disturbed and more upset. It showed that his profits has slip now almost 50% and that if he continue to go this route that he would either need to lay off most of the employees or completely shut the company down just to save himself from embarrassment. Stephen sat back in his chair quietly and he just thought about being in business for 20 years, “I can't let this go after 20 years I got to fix this!” He thought to himself.

“Mr. Williams what’s going to be the plan?” Vanessa asked knowing that her job may be on the line since she was one of the higher paid employees of the company?

“Well, right now I just don't know Vanessa it’s going to be a very difficult decision for me to make. I just don't understand why we’re not making any money? Were not losing accounts, we don't have any complaints, kids are spending money, but were just not bringing in the revenue

that we need to bring in to sustain the companies position and growth in the industry.” Stephen said as he sat back up folding his hand in front of him on the desk.

“I hope that everything turns around but I just want to be honest and ask, do I need to start looking for new job?” Vanessa asked bluntly.

“No, I don't think it's time to start looking for a new job. Vanessa you have been one of my most trusted assistants and I appreciate all of your hard work and I appreciate everything that you do. I promise that no matter what! The funny thing about it Vanessa is that I've been knowing you since high school. Remember when we took that business class?” He asked as he smiled at Vanessa and she smiled back.

“It was really interesting I never thought I would see the day that you and I would be working together. Now I know that business is not your thing and I know you found that out in the business class, but it has truly been a blessing to have you on the team and to be on the team as long as you have makes my job easier.

Remember when we used to run vending routes together and I would teach you how to fill up the machines and everything?” Stephen asked trying

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to lighten the mood. Vanessa just smile and nodded her head. “See that’s what I’m talking about Vanessa you know this business inside and out. You even know more than my wife does so that makes you invaluable to me!” Stephen said as Vanessa smiles back.

“I’ll take your word for it Mr. Williams. I don't know it just does not look good. You know that I believe in you and I believe in your vision but at the same time I have to also consider the fact that if things do go the wrong way I prefer to already have some resumes out there.” Vanessa said getting back to reality.

Stephen became despondent and he really did not know what to say to Vanessa because what she said made perfect sense. She had every right to start living her life and looking for a new job and she shouldn’t have to wait on a maybe from him although he said that he would never terminate her under any circumstances. Still it didn’t mean that things will work out in her favor it's almost like a political promise you say it but you don't necessarily want people to hold you to it.

He knew if worst came to worst that he would have to shut the business down and if he shut the

business down that meant he would not be able to pay her. If he wasn't able to pay her obviously she would not have a job. If she didn't have a job she couldn't take care of herself. Vanessa had every right to look for a new job she had every right to go out and find her place in the world and just because she's been loyal to him for nearly 20 years doesn't mean that she needs to lose everything as a result of that loyalty.

“Vanessa you are absolutely right and you have every right to start looking for a new job. I'm not going to stop you but, I will tell you this much I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that nothing bad happens. If you feel more comfortable sending out some resumes right now you can do that and if something comes along that you think is a better offer than what you're getting here I won't be upset because you decided to leave.

I understand you have to take care of yourself and just like I have to take care of myself. You have my full blessing, I want you to know that if anything ever happened it would be a total last resort to let you go and I'm working on it as we speak to make sure that everything goes the way it's supposed to go and that we end up being

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profitable. I have four weeks to decide what I want to do and to get things back on track. If you help me perhaps we can save the company and perhaps in saving the company we can preserve a lot of jobs.” Stephen said in a more serious tone.

Vanessa just looked at him and she remembered that wide eyed little kid that she grew up with in the neighborhood. The one who was a loner, the one who was overlooked but also the one who struck gold at age 16. Stephen was the kid who had done what no other person in that neighborhood was able to do and that was to fulfill his dreams to move up and to move out of the hood.

She could not help but admire him and his passion that he would allow her to be a part of what he was doing very early on. The pay was not bad she has always been at the top of the pay scale plus he treated her like a partner and she'd always appreciate that. The money that she earned was 10 times what the average employee earned. She was extremely happy and extremely comfortable with her lifestyle. Although she was never made a partner she was treated with the same respect and that she only called him Mr. Williams. That's because she wanted to make

sure that the employees understood that she was an employee just like they were, but outside of those walls he was just Stephen her best friend that she grew with in the neighborhood.

“Mr. Williams I appreciate everything you’re going to do and I’m going to do my very best to help you come up with some ideas that we can institute that will help people. I don’t want people to lose their jobs no more than I want to lose my job, so whatever it is that you need me to do you just let me know and it’s done. I will make sure that I get everything done timely and make sure that I can give you my best every day.” Vanessa said as she got up to exit the office.

“Vanessa I really appreciate you. You are truly a real friend and you deserve more. I tell you what if you help me build this company back and I promise to make you a partner!” Stephen said as he got up and walked over and shook Vanessa’s hand.

“Vanessa smiled, thank you very much Stephen, I really appreciate it. I look forward to being a working partner with you for the next 20 years.” Vanessa said as she shook Stephen’s hand and she left the office.

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Stephen turned around and walked back to his desk. He looked at the wall and saw the pictures of his family. He looked at a picture of his stepson Nicholas whom he wanted to pass the company on to him one day. He saw the pictures of his lovely wife who over the past 2 years have changed. Initially she was a very sweet and kind woman and she would do anything to help him. Over the 2 years of their marriage she has become increasingly angry and bitter and Stephen did not know why, but he was not satisfied he just didn't have time to deal with her right now. Eva needed to be dealt with later when he had more time right now.

The order of the day was to make sure that he stayed in business and that he was successful and that everybody got something out of it. It did not just include having a job it meant pay, it meant opportunity, it meant everything. He knew that Eva wouldn't be happy with him offering a partnership to Vanessa, but it was his decision to make and plus he wanted to retire early so he could enjoy his life and start doing some other things.

Running a vending company took more than 60 hours a week. He wanted to be able to cut that

down so he could spend more time with his wife and with his son. Having a partner would allow him to do that so that's the direction that he was going, but first he needed to save the business.

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CHAPTER 2

STEVEN'S HOUSE

Back at home Eva is on the telephone talking to her best friend Danni. Danni and Eva both grew up in Chicago in the same Southside neighborhood. They both went to the same grammar school, the same junior high school, the same high school and the same college. Both of them had relocated to Houston Texas after college because of the unique job opportunities that were available in oil and gas industry. Eva stop working once she was married to Stephen. Danni continued to work for the City of Houston.

“Danni I’m telling you Stephen is going broke and it's not going to work!” Eva says as she paces in the kitchen floor.

“Well maybe you should go back to work at

Ridgemont Oil? Danni suggested as Eva's face froze.

“Job! I'm not working on a job! Stephen told me that he was going to provide for me and that he was going to take care of me and my son and that we wouldn't have to want for anything and that I do not need to work! Danni I don't even work for his company, so why would I come back to work for somebody else's company?” Eva asked snapping back at Danni.

“Girl, all I'm telling you is that you need to do something. If he's going broke you going to have to figure something out because you going to end up being homeless!” Danni said firing back.

“Well I don't think I'll end up being broke girl, I mean we have investments and so forth. So worst case scenario I can divorce Stephen and I'll at least get half of his money and I can start my life over. I use to be able to go out with my friends, I use to be able to travel and I use to be able to have a good time and now I can't do anything because he is monitoring how much money is going out that I can't even have any fun. I can't do anything, I feel like a prisoner in my own home!” Eva said as she finally sits down

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at the kitchen table.

“I think that’s pathetic. I think that Stephen should do a much better job of taking care of you because you are a Queen and you need to be treated like a Queen. If he can’t afford the Queen than he needs not be the King you know what I mean?” Danni asked laughing.

“Well all I can tell you is that we are just having problems. We’re not sleeping in the same bedroom anymore. We barely talk to each other and it's his entire fault because he's got problems at work and he brings them home to me and I don’t want to hear it anymore. I just want him to be productive make some money and I want to go back to my life the way it was before all this foolishness started!” Eva said.

“Well let me asked you something girl, are ya’ll having sex? I mean, how is your sex life being affected by all of this?” Danni asked.

Eva got real quiet because she didn’t understand why Danni was asking her this question. What could be the significance of asking a question about her sex life? Eva never asked Danni about her sex life, she did from time to time share her bedroom activities with Danni and looking at it from that standpoint Eva did not

think that much of it.

“Well to be honest with you Danni we’re not having sex. I haven’t had sex with Stephen in two months and I don’t plan on it! I am going to hold out on him until he gets the money to do what’s right with our family!” Eva said.

“Well girl you know the saying, no romance without finance!” Danni says they laugh and joke about it until Eva stops laughing and get serious for a moment.

“Danni do you know who I ran into the other day?”

“No girl, I don’t know who was it?” Danni asked curiously.

“I ran into Darrell!” Eva said as she grinned.

“Darrell is he still around?” Dannie replied uninterested.

“Yes and girl he still looks good too. He still got his curly black hair. He still got that fine tight body, buns of steal and he is making money!” Eva said as she laughed out loud.

“Girl, maybe you should introduce him to me and than that way I can get me some money?” Danni said laughing.

“What do you mean? I’m not introducing him to you! You don’t want my sloppy seconds

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anyway. Once I'm done with him ain't nothing left!" Eva said as she laughed.

"Well all I'm asking is what are you going to do with him? Danni asked getting right to the point.

"I don't know I just saw him the other week and he gave me his phone number and I haven't called him or anything like that. He told me that he owned a night club and some barbershops." Eva said as she got up from the table to walk into the kitchen to pour her a glass of juice.

"Well it makes since to me I don't know what Stephen going to do but it might be good to have a backup plan." Eva added as she walked back to the table.

"You know that's probably good money. It's probably better than what Stephen does too. I mean come on Eva, vending machines? Think about it Eva, who's going to keep putting dollars into a vending machine that is a real tricky business. At least you know people have to get there haircut and people have been partying since the beginning of time. Having a snack, I don't think people have to have that and people don't have to drink anything. They can get water for free! I think that Darrell might be a much better

person to pair up with because with the types of businesses that he owns he has a brighter future!” Danni said indicating to Eva as if Eva should have already figured it out by now.

“I just don't know because Stephen is more established whereas Darrell is just getting started and I like financial security.” Eva responded being practical in her thinking.

“Yeah, he’s established but guess what? He’s going out of business! That doesn’t sound too established to me! Established to me is when somebody who has money can keep more money coming in and they aren’t worried about closing their business down! Established is when you’re able to have your wife go and spend money and do things she wants to do. Not being established means that you have to watch everything that’s being spent, I don’t know what your definition of it is, but to me that’s from the book of Danni chapter 2 verses 1-7!” Danni said as she laughed again.

“I don’t know Danni maybe you’re right. Maybe I do need to look around and look at my future differently because I really do want to do something different. I want to work this out with Stephen, but I'm not really sure if that is the right

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thing for me to do. Stephen provides security and so forth and he has done so he's been really good to me and my son. I don't want to give it up, but I'm still young and I still can go out there and find me somebody else to take care of me and my son. I don't want to keep putting us through this crap with Stephen's business. This is the first and the last time I'm going to go through it! Nicholas father doesn't have anything to do with him, I just kind of do my own thing. I'm with Stephen, it was good at first we're having a good time, but this year has been horrible and I don't want to have nothing more to do with it!" Eva said trying to talk herself into what she really wanted to do which was calling Darrell.

"Can I ask you a question Eva, who is Nicholas' father you never told me who his father is?" Danni asked curiously. Eva gets real quiet and she gets a little angry because it's a subject that is very sensitive to her. Nicholas does not know who his real father is and in fact no one knows who his real father is with the exception of Eva and she does not feel comfortable talking about it.

"Girl that is so wrong! Don't ask me anything like that because if I said who his father is you

would probably blast it all over the internet. I'm not going to tell you that just suffice to say that he has a father and his name is Stephen and his father ain't doing a good job right now taking care of him!" Eva says as she snapped back. "I will see what I will do about Darrell, but I really don't know we will just have to see." Eva said trying to end the conversation.

"All that I can tell you is this, do what you feel is right but remember if Stephen is not putting out any money then you ain't putting out nothing else that's the bottom line that's fair! Like my mom always told me a fair exchange ain't no robbery! If he wants to get some then he has got to give some that's fair. You just leave it at that!" Danni says as they both laugh.

Eva looks at the clock and notice that it's starting to get close to the time that she needs to pick up Nicholas from school.

"Danni I have to go because I need to go get ready to pick up Nicholas from school, so I will call you later and we'll chitchat about this later." Eva said getting up from the table.

"Girl hook me up with Darrell though I would really like to talk to him and get to know him. I can see my name on a couple of barbershops."

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Danni says as she laughs.

“Girl bye!” Eva says she hangs up the phone and walks to the kitchen and put the glass into the sink.

As she turned around she see’s the family portrait of her Stephen and Nicholas. She begins to wonder what happened to them. She begins to ask herself why she feels differently about Stephen all of a sudden. Was it really the fact that he didn't have any money that made her feel differently about him or was it just the fact that she become greedy and self absorbed that she just couldn't see anything but the money and never him. Did she really love Stephen after all? As she thought about it she quickly tried to get the thought out of her mind because she just didn't want to face the truth of whatever the answer may be.