



## NOTES

### UNIT: III (supplementary-L:3)

#### THE COIN DIVER

- *Cypryan Ekwensi*

**Introduction:** The author Cypryan Ekwensi was born in the city of Minna, Nigeria on 26<sup>th</sup> of September, 1921 and died on 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2007. He was a Nigerian author of novels, short stories and children's fictions. 'The Coin Diver' is taken from his collection of short stories called 'Lokotown'. It is a very beautiful romantic story setting on the Atlantic shore of Freetown in Sierra Leone. In this story a poor coin diver tried very hard to win the heart of a beautiful lady who sang like a canary. After trying without success, he sailed to Canary Islands in Cape Verde and bought himself a canary. The story depicts hopes and disappointments, joy and sadness in the life of Charlie, the coin diver.

**Summary:** On the Atlantic shore of Freetown, one afternoon in the bright sunlight, Nancy came down the lane alone. She was tall and beautiful with rich black skin. And her lips were red with lipsticks. Charlie, the coin diver pushed aside the flower bush and gazed at her from behind. As he was attracted to the beauty of the girl he wanted to express his love for her. He was very poor. But Nancy was the singing star of Grand Palm Hotel. She was like a singing canary. Because of her, everybody who came to Freetown must go to Grand Palm to lodge. Charlie hopefully stepped forward and told Nancy that he had something to tell her. But to see Nancy's smiling face he was confused and did not know how to express his word. When he turned his face, he saw Diamond Joe, his bitter rival standing behind him. Diamond Joe extended his hand and clasped Nancy's delicate and shapely fingers. They walked away together. Charlie boiled with envy. He was disgusted to the way they held hands and whispered into each other's ears. He watched them till they turned to the corner. He was then upset and looked down at his poor dress. He knew why he had failed to court Nancy. It was because of his unimpressive dress. But he did not lose hope. He thought himself if the girl loved him his dress should not matter. He remembered the night when he first heard the song of Nancy and how since then he had known no peace of mind. Once he entered Nancy's dressing room while her girls were helping her adorn herself. He wanted to propose her to be his wife. But he could not express what he liked to tell in the presence of the girls. Instead he said that he wanted her to improve her voice. Nancy got angry and asked if he meant to tell her she did not sing well. Charlie rose his hand in protest and begged to pardon telling that she sang like a canary and nobody in Africa had ever sung like her. He also said that even if he was a poor coin diver, he could die for her sake. Nancy refused the offer.

Charlie loved Nancy truly but she was more attracted to Diamond Joe. He became disappointed. He could not concentrate in his work. More cargo boats and passengers'

liners were coming to Freetown. The tourists were throwing more coins at the sea. But Charlie had lost his interest. Earlier, there were music in his voice as he invited the tourists to his small canoe. But now that music was missing. He found he was not the same man without Nancy. He thought that even if he could not get Nancy he must have something- a symbol of her. Nancy meant music to him and if he had music like her, he could survive. His music must be unique and it must be natural, fresh and melodious like a canary. Finally, he planned to get a canary. He did not tell anyone of his plan, thinking that they would discourage him. He filled his canoe with food and water and one night he sailed to Canary Islands in Cape Verde to bring a canary for himself.

For many days he was in the Atlantic, facing many difficulties. He finally ceased off in Canary Islands. But it was impossible for him to catch a canary. At the bazar, he found a canary with a voice like Nancy. But the bird cost all that he had and he got no means to return. Luckily, he found a captain of a cargo boat and he told him his hard luck story. The captain was impressed by his courage that he singed him on his boat for the homeward journey. Back in Freetown, news of the singing bird canary, now called Nancy spread fast and wide. Charlie's house became a tourists' attraction. The beautiful Nancy's popularity was overtaken by the bird. People offered double the money he had spent for the bird but he did not sell it. One day Nancy and Diamond Joe came to Charlie's house all of a sudden. Nancy looked at the bird with admiration. On seeing Nancy's beautiful face Charlie's love for her came back more sharply. Diamond Joe was burning with jealousy, offered Charlie a handsome price for the canary but Charlie declined the offer. When Nancy made the bird sing Charlie felt Nancy's love extended from the bird to its owner. When Charlie came back after the day's work he found the lifeless body of his canary. He was frozen into silence. He realized someone who hated the bird had killed it. He remembered how Diamond Joe was jealous of the bird. He rolled up his sleeves and went out in search of Diamond Joe. He found him at a drinking house. He went straight to him. Catching him by the collar, he smashed his face with his hand. Then he went to Grand Palm in search of Nancy. As he did not find her, he walked the streets all through the day searching her.

When evening came Charlie thought that Nancy must have left the place. So, he returned home. As he pushed his door open he saw a shadowy figure. It was Nancy. She told him about the death of the canary. She confessed her role in the death of the bird. She also said that out of jealousy, she secretly asked Diamond Joe to let the bird fly away from its cage and put another in its place but Joe strangled the bird and left in the cage. Nancy realized the bad nature of Diamond Joe and asked Charlie to put her in his house so that she could always sing every day. Charlie was confused with the change of Nancy's attitude towards him. He realized that something new was happening to his world. He took her arm and they walked out.

### **Word Notes**

Coin diver – person who dives in the sea to collect coins thrown by passengers and tourists for good luck and safety or some sort of entertainment. Many African young men used to dive into the sea to pick up coins. For tourists it is a sort of entertainment but for coin divers that is how they earn their living. Charlie of the story is also such a person

**Para 2:** In a flutter – in a state of nervousness and excitement.

**Para 3:** Bored right through him – pierced through him; gazing at – looking at.

**Para 5:** Rival – opponent; gleamed – brightened; clasped – grasped, held; delicate – soft; slip – pass; disgusted – feeling of strong dislike; boiled – became restless; envy – jealousy; sneering – disrespectful; contempt – a feeling that someone or something is unimportant and deserves no respect.

**Para 6:** Tunic shirt – long shirt without sleeves; exclusive – of high quality and expensive.

**Para 7:** Ill at ease – nervousness; destined – meant for.

**Para 10:** Flashed - look with an expression of annoyance.

**Para 13:** Spark – brightness.

**Para 16:** Flattery - insincere praise.

**Para 17:** Calling at – stopping at; thronged – crowded; gangways – bridges between the sides of a ship and the shore; hailed – shouted.

**Para 19:** Jumping surface – the wavy surface of sea water; desperately – giving little hope of success; going over side – Charlie means he is getting off the ship.

**Para 20:** Rearing wall – rising wall

**Para 21:** Cape Verde – a group of islands in the West Africa; belted – fastened tight like a belt; porpoise – dolphin like sea animals; eased off – became safe.

**Para 23:** All he had in the world – all the money he had; hard luck – bad luck; signed on – employed.

**Para 24:** Stormy passage – sea journey which was dangerous and uncomfortable.

**Para 25:** Touching Freetown – coming to Freetown for a few days.

**Para 26:** Eager joy – joy that comes out of excitement; vitality – energy, strength; depicted – painted; bubble up – to become excitement.

**Para 32:** Rapt – full of attention; in vain – useless; reputation – fame

**Para 34:** Froze – became still.

**Para 35:** Rolled up – turned up.

**Para 36:** Smashed his way – went violently.

**Para 38:** Broke up – came to an end.

**Para 46:** Dimply – slowly; a light was glowing in the dark – it meant Nancy was nearer to Charlie.

**Para 51:** Beating surf – waves breaking in white foam on the sea shore; dreaming – Charlie was so happy that he could not believe what was happening.

