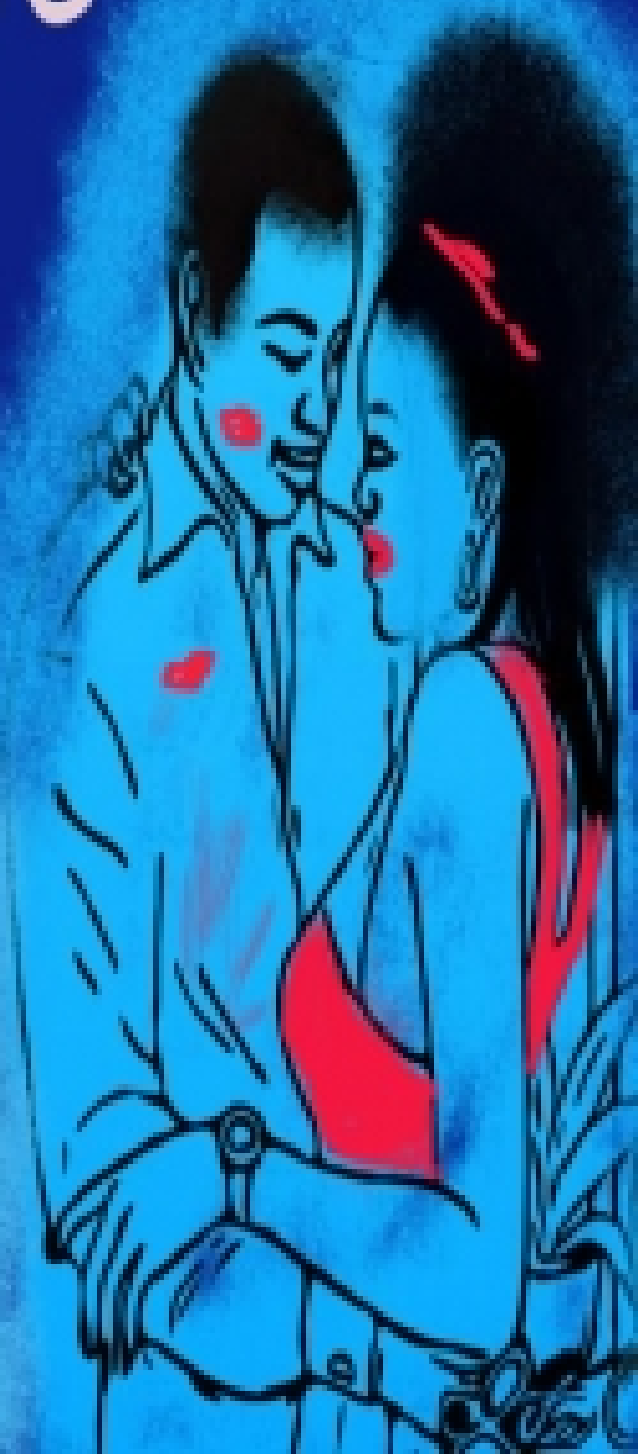


# Ripples of Fate

*Rita O. okeah*



Emeka 'I need to talk to you' Chinwe said.

'babe, what is it' he asked

'is not something to talk about on the phone' Chinwe replied.

'ok, then. When will you be through with your lectures ' he asked.

' I am done for today' she replied

'then you can come over to my place. I will be leaving the office by 5pm' Emeka said.

'ok babes, will see you then. Bye'

'bye he said hanging the phone.

Chinwe sighed quietly as she looked around her room. She was sharing the off campus room with her friend Angela who had still not return from her lectures.

The room was well furnished for a student's room. It was a self contained flat and not too far from her school. The price was high but both of them were capable of paying the rent. Angela was a final year student like Chinwe but already engaged to be married to Ike from her year one. Ike was a business man with enough money to take care of a woman. Chinwe on her part came from a wealthy home and her parents had been solely responsible for her education. Chinwe had been dating Emeka from when she was in her second year at the University while he was in his final year. Now Emeka had graduated and had gotten a good job.

Chinwe quickly took her bath and took some clothes for the weekend. She usually spent most weekends in Emeka 's place because that was really the only time she had.

Chinwe quickly sent a text message to Angela to let her know that she was going to Emeka 's place and picked up her bag.

' I wonder how he will receive the news' she pondered absently waving down a taxi.

As she boarded the taxi, she perceived an overbearing smell

of loud perfume and almost vomited.

'driver, please give me your winder' Chinwe said.

'take ' he said handing over the broken winder for the window.

As Chinwe drew down the car window, she inhaled the fresh air that entered the car.

' that's better' she said to herself. What is wrong with me' she wondered.

This was how she had felt two days ago that had made Angela talk to her.

Angela had just walked in from the salon looking very beautiful with her new hairstyle. Chinwe quickly ran to admire the hair and almost threw up at the smell of the sweet spray.

'what's wrong with you 'she asked.

' I really don't know ' Chinwe had replied.

' are you ok' Angela asked?

'I think so' said Chinwe.

'well, you better go for malaria test. Sometimes, this is how people react to malaria 'she replied.

' I will stop here , driver' Chinwe said as she saw that the car had reached her destination.

She collected her change and walked to the gate that led to Emeka's house.

'madam, good evening ' the gate man greeted.

' good evening Musa, how are you?

'Fine madam, na just hungry de catch us' he laughed.

'ok na, take this for coke' Chinwe replied.

'thank you. God bless you plenty plenty madam '

Chinwe smiled silently as she walked into the compound.

She was used to Musa' s antics.

She took out her own key and opened the door to Emeka's house. She had a spare key for the past two years that he had moved to the house from his parents home. She quickly walked into the kitchen to see what she should prepare for

dinner.

Exactly 5.30, Emeka drove into the compound and walked inside the house.

'good to see you my love' he said as they embraced.

'me to. How was work ' she asked

' very good. I think I may be sent next month for a course outside the country ' he said.

' waoh, that's great news ' she shouted.

Hmmmm. That reminds me. You wanted to tell me something? He asked.

' yes, but it can wait. Let's hear and celebrate this good news " Chinwe said

'ok, if you say so' he replied.

As they ate and drank the wine from the fridge, Chinwe wondered how Emeka will take the news. Glancing up she saw his eyes on her.

'now, You can tell me what is bothering you ' he said.

' I hope you won't be angry 'she replied

' why should I be. Are you breaking up with me? He asked anxiously

'Oh gosh, no... '

' you are having an extra year?

'no!

'then what?

'I am pregnant! She blurted out

'what! '.....

Emeka felt as though he had been slapped by a heavy weight wrestler. He was stunned by Chinwe's revelation. She was pregnant? He was a father?

'I said I was pregnant 'he heard Chinwe say

' are you sure? He asked

'very sure. I thought it was malaria and went for a test. I am positively pregnant 'she replied.

Emeka loved Chinwe and hoped to marry her but at this

point, he was confused.

Emeka was the only son among five girls and the eldest. Though he was not from a poor home, yet he had great responsibilities. His father was now retired from the civil service and three of his sisters were yet to enter the University.

Emeka thought about his upcoming trip outside the country and what the pregnancy meant.

'what should we do? He asked

'I don't know 'Chinwe said.

' I am not yet ready for marriage 'he said

' and me too. But I can't terminate this pregnancy 'Chinwe said.

' so what do we do? He asked again

'my parents will be very upset with me but I don't care. I will keep the baby'

'Chinwe, how could you allow this to happen' Mrs Amadi asked.

'mum, I am so sorry' Chinwe cried.

'what do we tell your father, he will kill you ' she said.

' mum, you need to help me talk to dad'

'what will I tell him. After he has spent so much on your education? ' she said.

' I really don't know what to do ' Chinwe sobbed.

' but how could you let this happen? You know the kind of family you belong to. You want to bring shame on us?

The Amadi family was a very known and respected one in the community. Mr Amadi was a professor of history at the state owned University and Mrs Amadi was a secondary school teacher. They were both Knight and Dame at the Anglican church and very influential in the community. Chinwe was their first child and they had great hopes that she would make them proud.

Mrs Amadi wondered were she had gone wrong as a mother.

She had longed for the day that Chinwe her first fruit will get married and she too will dance the mother of the bride dance.

She knew about Emeka and liked the young man but she had thought that they would have waited till after Chinwe's graduation before getting married and having children.

'what will I tell my husband? She wondered as she watched Chinwe crying silently.

'get up and go and wash your face' she told her.

As Chinwe left her to the bathroom, she made her decision.

Emeka could not sleep. He tossed from one end of his bed to the other thinking of one thing. He was a father!

He knew he would be a father someday but never knew it was going to be so soon.

He was already thirty and was matured to be married but he feared what his parents would say.

'but I really love Chinwe and would like to marry her' he thought.

He wished he was a senior staff already, he would have married her immediately.

'I wonder what her parents will say' he thought.

He knew that Mr Amadi would not take it lightly and had discouraged Chinwe from telling her parents but she had refused. He could not wait to find out from her, what their reaction would be.

Emeka made a quick prayer and finally fell asleep.

'I love you sweetheart 'Chinwe said

' I love you too' Emeka replied.

'I don't believe we are living in this kind of house, it's so beautiful' gushed Chinwe.

The house was a duplex, beautifully furnished. Chinwe walked round the house inspecting the surroundings. They walked to the back of the house and saw the blue water running in the family pool.

'waoh, it's really beautiful ' Chinwe said'

"yes it is. I heard we would stay here as long as I continue working for them ' Emeka replied.

' thank God for this favour'

'thank God I married you my darling ' Emeka said cuddling her.

' so this car is the official car for you?

'yes, and I am getting yours for you too soon ' Emeka said

' really! I love you so much ' Chinwe replied

'I love you more. I thank you for agreeing to be my wife and mother of my children' Emeka said.

They looked into each other's eyes with love and embraced. As they clung together, they were jostled by the loud cry of their baby....

The cry of the baby was Emeka's phone ringing and waking him from his sweet dream.

Emeka looked at the time and the caller ID, it was Chinwe. What could be the problem? He wondered. The time was 4.30am

'Emeka,I couldn't sleep. I had to call you 'she said

' what is it? Are you alright' he asked

'I am not okay. I am scared of my father. I told my mom yesterday and she was very upset ' she cried.

' calm down, everything will be alright 'he said

' what are we going to do' she asked

'I have made my decision. We are getting married 'he said.

' what! '

' I will explain when we see, tell your mother ' he said hanging up.

' that dream is a message to me' Emeka thought as he went to the bathroom to take his bath and get ready for work. His mind was made up.....

'getting married? Chinwe wondered dropping her phone by her bed side. What had Emeka meant by those words?

Chinwe was not sure of what Emeka had told her because she knew she was not yet ready to settle down. She still had one more year at the University and though a lot of girls did it, she had not envisaged herself getting married while still in school. She decided to have a talk with Angela.

'don't be silly Chi, it's not new' Angela said laughing.

'I don't like it'

'then you should have prevented it from happening' Angela said.

Angela was shocked to hear that Chinwe was pregnant. She had thought that Chinwe was taking precautions.

'if Emeka says he will marry you, go ahead' she said

'that's what he told me'

'so what's the problem, don't you want to marry him?

Angela asked.

'I love him but I really need to finish first' Chinwe replied.

'well, think very well. This pregnancy will start showing soon and people will start talking. Remember your parents standing in the community and church especially. Meanwhile you don't want to abort it' Angela said.

'God forbid. I will keep this child' Chinwe said.

'then, do the needful'

As Angela left for lectures, Chinwe thought for a long time on what to do. She knew it would not be easy but she decided to call her mother.

'mum, have you told dad about what I told you? She asked

'no. Why do you ask?

'thank God! Please don't tell him.' begged Chinwe

'why? Have you done something stupid Chi? The mother asked.

'what do you mean mum? Chinwe asked

'have you terminated the pregnancy?

'oh no mum, I couldn't do such a thing' she cried.

'oh, thank God' the mother said relieved.

'mum, please don't tell dad anything yet. Emeka wants to marry me but I need to speak with him first. We need to



talk. 'Chinwe said.

' oh really, that's good 'said Mrs Amadi.

As Mrs Amadi hung up the phone, she did a little dance of joy. Her decision to keep calm and quiet had paid off.

She remembered going to the church the evening Chinwe had broken the news to her.

' God, forgive me for all my wrongs. In any way I have neglected my duties as a mother, forgive me. Take away this impending shame and reproach from me. Help my family and give my daughter the wisdom on the best choice to make. Oh God, if this young man is her husband, open his eyes to make the right choice.' she had prayed and poured out her heart before God.

Mrs Amadi danced with joy again as the thought of having a wedding in her family too, filled her with smiles. God had taken away her shame.

She could not contain her joy as she dressed up for work. She was already planning the wedding....

'I have made up my mind' Emeka

'why do you want us to get married now, You know both of us are not ready 'Chinwe said

' after my dream, I am ready ' Emeka replied.

He told Chinwe of the wonderful dream he had.

' okay, but I hope you are not doing this out of sympathy? She said

'no way! I really want to spend the rest of my life with you ' he said.

' what will your parents say' asked Chinwe

Emeka had not given any thought to what his parents would say but he planned on telling them this weekend when he visited home.

'how about your parents' asked Emeka.

'I have told my mother but not my father.' she replied.

' well, we are adults and it's our life ' Emeka replied.

' so let's discuss how everything will be' Chinwe replied.

They agreed to formally tell Chinwe's parents after Emeka had returned from his parents. Chinwe suggested doing just the introduction since Emeka was leaving for Europe in a months time.

'that's a good idea. At least people will know that you are officially spoken for. When I return, we will do the traditional and white wedding ' Emeka said.

' yes. I need to study for my exams as well. I won't have time to plan a wedding now ' Chinwe replied.

Chinwe had thought about the whole thing. It was going to be hectic for her. She was comfortable with just doing an elaborate introduction for marriage. She needed her strength in the next months to carry the baby as well as her final exams.

As they parted ways that day, both of them thought of the days ahead and prayed for strength.

'Emeka, is it not early to be talking about marriage? ' Mrs Ige the mother asked.

'well, if he is ready, who are we to say no' said the father, Mr Ige

'I thought you are travelling soon? Asked the mother

'yes, next month ' Emeka replied

'so what's the plan? Asked the father.

'we plan to do introduction and the bride price. When I come back, we will do the rest ' Emeka replied.

' we pray for money, it's not easy to get married 'the mother said.

' God will help them, Margaret' Mr Ige

Emeka's father always stopped his mother's whining by calling her English name.

As Emeka left his parents, he was full of joy. He quickly called Chinwe to tell her.

' my parents have given their blessing. Please talk to your mother. I need to see her. ' Emeka said

' okay, I will call my mother and get back to you' she said.

As soon as she hung up, she called her mother and informed her of the latest developments.

'come along with him to my office tomorrow morning ' Mrs Amadi said.

' okay mum, you are the best' Chinwe said.

'so this is it? I am getting married already? Wondered Chinwe as she hung up the phone...

Emeka felt very nervous going to see Chinwe 's mother. Emeka chose many outfits contemplating on the suitable one for meeting his future mother in law. He finally settled for a black trouser and a blue shirt with his shoes.

'I am neither under dressed or over dressed 'he thought. As he walked into the school premises, he spied Chinwe waving at him.

' hi' she said

'hi' he replied as they embraced lightly.

'where is your mom? Emeka asked

'waiting for us at her office 'she replied taking his hand and walking towards the vice principal's office.

Mrs Amadi had seen them coming already and was waiting by the door. She ushered them into her office and closed the door.

' good day ma' greeted Emeka

Good day, how are you doing?

'fine ma'

'how is your family?

'they are well '

' hmmm, mum... ' Chinwe said clearing her throat.

' ok, Chinwe has told me everything that happened. What's the plan? She asked.

'our plan ma, is to get married. We want to do the introduction and bride price first' Emeka replied.

'are your parents in support?

'yes ma. I told them what I wanted and they agree with me'

'ok, so what do you want me to do?

'we want you to help talk to daddy for us' chipped in Chinwe.

'yes ma. We need pointers on what to do '

"ok, I will do my best. When do you plan to start the process? She asked

' beginning of next week because I will be travelling out of the country by the following month ' Emeka replied.

Everything was finalized and Emeka left Chinwe with her mother as he went back to his office.

' he is a determined young man. I admire his spirit. I hope you really want to get married to him? She asked.

'yes mum. I love Emeka '

' I will talk to your father tonight ' she said.

' thanks mum' Chinwe said.

That night, Mrs Amadi had a talk with her husband who was not happy with the news.

'why can't she finish her education first. Why the hurry? He asked

'the young man is traveling out of the country and wants to formally make his intentions known before leaving ' she replied.

' still not enough reason to rush marriage. When he comes back might be a better time ' Mr Amadi said.

Mrs Amadi had no choice but to let the cat out of the bag.

When Mr Amadi heard that Chinwe was already pregnant, he was furious.

' why am I the last person to know what is happening in this house? He shouted.

'Take it easy' Mrs Amadi replied.

Mr Amadi stopped shouting and began to pace the room. He was angry at his daughter but on a second thought, he was happy that the young man was ready to marry her. He couldn't imagine the shame if she had had the pregnancy out of wedlock. He couldn't afford to lose his dignity and position in the society.

Mr Amadi sat down and thought of the elders he would need to involve in the marriage ceremony.

As Mrs Amadi watched her husband, she knew the first battle was won. She could see on his face determination to see that their child had the best.

The day for the introduction was fixed. Emeka and his family were prepared to pay the bride price as soon as possible. His parents were ready to go ahead with it especially when Emeka told them that Chinwe was pregnant.

'you mean, I will soon be a grandmother? Mrs Ige asked Emeka brought Chinwe to formally meet his mother before the family gathering.

Mrs Margaret Ige saw Chinwe and liked what she saw. Chinwe was a smart and beautiful girl and won Emeka's mother's heart when she offered to help her in the kitchen.

'hmmmm, she might be homely after all' she thought. At first, she had thought Chinwe might be those kind of nowadays girls who knew little or nothing about home management but everything about fashion and makeup.

Chinwe felt at home with Mrs Ige and it was not because they spoke the same language or came from the same ethnic area. She was almost her mother's age mate but whereas her own mother was light skinned, Emeka 's mother was dark skinned. Chinwe could see where Emeka got his dark and handsome look.

'my daughter, hope you are ready for marriage. You know marriage is not a bed of roses? She said.

'mama, we are not getting married right away you know ' Chinwe replied.

' I know but it's same. After the bride price, you are technically married ' she said

' well, you know that Emeka will be away and it's only when he comes back from overseas we will do the white wedding '

' I know dear, there is no difference'  
'mama, we will cross that bridge when we get to it.

Chinwe will stay with her parents till everything is done  
'added Emeka.

That was their plan. Chinwe needed her mother's support during Emeka 's absence with the pregnancy. Emeka was billed to spend six months in Italy. The wedding will be conducted immediately he returned and both of them would move into his apartment to prepare for the arrival of the baby.

It seemed a good idea as it will give Chinwe ample time to prepare for her final exams without any distraction from Emeka .

As Emeka and Chinwe left the house that day, Mrs Ige hoped for the best for her first and only son.

Mrs Ige was happy that things were going well with her son. To think that he was the first person to travel overseas in her husband's family? and now he was about to start his marriage process.

'God has remembered my family ' she said dancing round and round her room.....

It was supposed to be a small affair with both families alone with some relatives from both sides but it turned into a big event. It was almost a traditional wedding with friends and family in attendance. It was soon published on social media and Emeka and Chinwe were bombarded with calls from people that didn't know about the affair.

Mr and Mrs Amadi pulled out all the stops for their first daughter. Though Chinwe and Emeka wanted it small, the couple invested their own money to make the occasion grand.

Emeka's family officially declared their intention to marry Chinwe. They had a closed door meeting with elders from both sides.

An agreement was reached and all the traditional requirements and bride price paid. That evening, Chinwe was formally handed over to Emeka's family.

That night, Chinwe was escorted by some of her family maidens to Emeka's house. This was the culture and chinwe spent that night with Emeka .

The following day, Emeka was called by his boss to submit his passport for ticket purchase.

' I am traveling a week ahead of schedule ' Emeka told Chinwe.

' what happened?

'I don't know, will found out from the office '

' oh no. I was thinking I will spend two more weeks before you leave ' she moaned

' don't worry, I am coming back soon ' Emeka replied.

' ok oh. Anyway, it will give me time to concentrate on my studies' she said

Two weeks later, Chinwe accompanied Emeka to the airport as he left for the six months course with mixed feelings.

'I will miss you ' she said

' me too. But we will communicate everyday' he replied

'it won't be the same'

'be safe. And take care of our baby too ' he said playfully. Chinwe watched with tears in her eyes as the plane took off. She turned away and walked to the company car that will drop her off her house.

' God, please keep him safe for me and the baby ' Chinwe prayed silently.

Emeka sat down in the plane and sighed with joy. He was a happy man now that he had finished with the traditional marriage rites. He was married and that was a huge step in the right direction. He felt so relaxed and happy on the trip. Emeka knew he had started a journey to greatness. He could feel it!

'tea or coffee? Asked one of the air hostess.

'tea please 'he replied.

This is the life' mused Emeka as he ate his food.

Some of his colleagues who had travelled for this course had told him how it was. He knew as soon as he finished the course and return, his level would change. He couldn't wait to start his family life.

He wanted Chinwe and his children to have the best and he was committed in making it happen.

He looked around the plane glancing at the other men who were on the same mission with him. He hoped and believed he would be promoted after the course.

He fell into a deep sleep while listening to music with his ear phone.

" Mr Emeka Ige, you are to resume work at our office at Ikeja as the chief engineer ' Mr Ali said.

' thank you very much sir' Emeka could barely contain his joy

'congratulations, once again ' Mr Ali said.

He quickly took out his phone to dial Chinwe's number. It



was ringing and when she picked, he only could shout for joy. When he calmed down, he heard her say..

'fasten your seat belt, we are about to land'

It was the pilot's voice and Emeka realized he had been dreaming.

As he fastened his seat belt, he felt elated that he was billed for success and his trip had God's blessing.

He took out his note and wrote down his second wonderful dream...

Chinwe could feel the baby kick as she gently rubbed her now protruding stomach.

She sat facing the doctor as he scribbled on a paper.

Today was her antenatal hospital day and she had been the second person to arrive at the antenatal ward.

Chinwe loved to be early so she could learn from the nurses who taught them some of the things they needed to know especially as first time mothers.

She was four months pregnant when her mother took her to register at the same hospital that Chinwe had been born.

Mrs Amadi had been so thrilled to be expecting her first grandchild that she had offered to pay for the registration fees.

Chinwe had learnt a lot in the two months she had attended the antenatal classes.

Now in her last trimester, she could hear the baby kick furiously which made her happy as this was a sign of a healthy baby according to the nurses.

'madam, you need to go for a scan 'the doctor said.

'is there any problem doctor? Asked Mrs Amadi who had accompanied Chinwe that day.

As Chinwe looked inquiring at the doctor, he smiled at her reassuredly.

'no problem, it's a routine thing especially for a primer whose uterus is large enough to suspect multiple babies ' he

said.

'are you trying to say she may be having twins?' asked Mrs Amadi.

'it's likely, though we should have discovered before now. However to be very certain, I recommend a scan' he replied.

'thank you doctor' said Chinwe as she stood up to leave with her mother.

'this will be just double blessing if it's true' gushed Mrs Amadi.

Chinwe did not want to have twins. She had a lot of things on her hands and having two children at once was not what she wanted at the moment.

Emeka had just a month before he returned from his overseas trip and she had a project defense in the next three weeks after his return. Besides that, they were planning for the white wedding because Emeka had insisted on having it before she put to bed.

With a prayer, Chinwe climbed into her mother's car hoping that the doctor's suspicions will be false.

'congratulations ma, you are having a baby girl' said the scan doctor.

Chinwe wondered why people called her 'ma' when she was so young. She felt so old and thought that probably she looked old because of the strain of the pregnancy. She knew she looked swollen that even her nostrils were huge. She felt ugly and wondered how Emeka would feel if he saw her. She even had begged him to postpone the wedding again but he had refused. She had explained her feelings to her mother who reassured her not to think about such things.

'you are beautiful dear. They call you ma because you are married and it's a sign of respect' Mrs Amadi said.

'baby girl?' Asked the mother

'yes' replied the doctor.

'how many children please' asked Chinwe.

'one'

'thank God ' Chinwe breathed a sigh of relief.

She was happy to be having a baby girl but happier knowing she was carrying just one baby.

She allowed the lady to wipe off the slime off her stomach and stood up covering her stomach with her shirt.

Now, that she knew her plight, she could not wait to share the news with Emeka

They chatted on wassap every evening and though she had told him last night that she had an appointment with the scan doctor, she didn't mention that the doctor suspected twins.

Feeling happy and elated, Chinwe began to dream of her unborn daughter. She didn't notice how quiet her mother had been until she spoke.

'ha, Chinwe! I really had hoped that you will have a boy first ' Mrs Amadi said.

' why 'asked Chinwe in surprise

' don't you know that our people value the male child more? She asked.

'mum, are you still so old fashioned? Asked Chinwe.

'I know what I am talking about oh. I thought you will learn from my experience ' wailed Mrs Amadi.

Mrs Amadi could never forget what she had passed through in the hands of her inlaws.

She had given birth to three girls in the space of four years after her marriage to Mr Amadi.

Though Mr Amadi never complained, she began to have some quarrels with her mother in law.

God must have known that she didn't have the stamina to fight her inlaws when the next pregnancy was a boy.

She eventually shut the mouth of her inlaws when she had two more boys making it six children in all.

Mrs Amadi had prayed that her three daughters will have male children first when they eventually get married.

Mrs Amadi prayed that Chinwe would have good inlaws who

will accept any sex of child. But most importantly, she made up her mind to make it her prayer point that Chinwe's subsequent pregnancies will produce male children.....

Slowly, Chinwe began to adapt to motherhood. Little Adaeze looked so much like her that Emeka sometimes called her mummy.

Mrs Amadi was incharge of the baby and was staying with Chinwe for some time.

Chinwe was happy to have her mother who put her through a lot of things that even attending ante natal classes had not taught her.

Barely a week after having Adaeze , she left the baby at home to defend her project. Chinwe was so happy to have finally graduated from school. She looked forward to married life with Emeka .

Three months later, the baby was dedicated and it was a grand affair coupled with the fact that Emeka had been promoted to a senior staff.

The party was a joint party for the baby, Emeka 'spromotion and Chinwe's graduation.

Emeka 's family were so thrilled for Emeka that they brought a live goat to church for Thanksgiving.

After the party, Mrs Amadi who had been shuttling between her house and Chinwe's house made her intention known that she was leaving permanently.

'oh mum, I still need you' whinned Chinwe.

'I will still be coming, but it's time I also allow you to take the rein of your home' Mrs Amadi said.

She had a long talk with Chinwe and advised her to do her best and call for assistance where needed.

Chinwe watched with sadness and sobriety as her mother drove away.

Gradually, things become accustomed to both Emeka and Chijwe as they both began to explore and grow in their marriage.

Emeka got a nanny for the baby who came in the morning and left in the evening.

Emeka came one evening all smiles and waving a letter at her.

'what is it'? Chinwe asked

'my dream has come to pass' he replied.

'which of them? Chinwe asked laughing.

Emeka had numerous dreams which he always shared with her.

'remember that early dream I had that made me take the decision to marry you? He said.

Emeka handed the letter to Chinwe and she shouted with joy when she read the contents.

Emeka had been given a bigger apartment and an official car.

'waoh, it is real now. So we are moving? She said.

'yes sweetheart, you are my inspiration, my muse' he laughed dancing with Chinwe.

They danced and embrace and about to share a kiss when Adaeze cried from her room.

'this girl is something else' grumbled Emeka as Chinwe walked into the room laughing..

They packed into their new apartment a month later and it was like a palace compared to where they had been. It was a duplex with five rooms and a family pool.

'four rooms for our children and one for both of us to share' Emeka said.

'you mean you want us to have four children? Asked Chinwe  
'as if you didn't know 'replied Emeka laughing with Adaeze on his arm.

Chinwe was just teasing Emeka . They had agreed to have

two boys and two girls.

Chinwe could just picture her four kids by the pool and running through the big house. She looked towards heaven praying silently that God who had been blessing them should continually do so.

The day Chinwe went to pick up her call up later, she took Adaeze and her nanny to her mother's place to wait for her. She greeted her mother and explained what she was going to school for and how long she might be.

Mrs Amadi looked at Chinwe and smiled.

'no problem dear, I am happy to see my granddaughter' she said picking up Adaeze who was starting to throw some steps.

'she is so fast, walking already at eleven months! That means you should be warming up for another child' laughed Mrs Amadi

'mum, not now oh' Chinwe replied

'why not? Said Mrs Amadi

As Chinwe drove away from her mother's house, she pondered on what she had said. She had not seen her menstrual period for last month and was getting worried already. As she walked into the hall, she hoped it was not what she was thinking because she was not prepared for it.

Chinwe never knew that getting a call up letter was going to be a hectic affair.

By the time it got to her turn, she was exhausted. She left the place very tired and hungry.

The next day, she felt more tired than the last time but tried to pretend all was alright.

Emeka knew something was wrong with Chinwe but he could not place his hand on it. She was too tired these days that he had to bath Adaeze for two nights in a row.

'is something the matter? He asked

' I really don't know, I feel so exhausted after I wake up each

morning 'she replied holding her head. She could feel a slight headache building up already.

' first thing Saturday morning, I am taking you to the doctor. After all, we have a company clinic 'he said.

On Saturday, after checking Chinwe and doing some routine test, the doctor ushered them into his office. As they sat down, he smiled and extended his hands for an handshake with Emeka .

' congratulations, you are having a baby' he said.

'what'! Both of them shouted.

That was when it dawned on Chinwe how stupid and naive she had been. She should have suspected pregnancy from the onset.

As they left the clinic, Emeka could barely contain his excitement. He wanted another child and maybe this time, it will be a boy 'he thought.

Chinwe was furious with herself. She had one year of NYSC to do and just like Adaeze 's birth, it was another unplanned for pregnancy. How was she to cope with two children. She could not wait to talk to her mother as soon as she gets home.

Mrs Amadi was thrilled to the bones for Chinwe.

'my daughter, you are married and your husband loves you. He has money to take care of you and as many children as you want' she said.

'that's not the point. I have my life and career to think of too mom' Chinwe said.

'don't worry, things will fall into place' Mrs Amadi assured her.

'hmmm, mom I am not sure about that oh' Chinwe said.

'I just pray that it's a boy this time around' said Mrs Amadi

As Chinwe hung up, she didn't think about her mother's wishes but how she was going to cope with everything

happening so fast...

Chinwe took the scan report and stopped by her mother's place to pick up Adaeze and the nanny that she had left there to wait for her. Chinwe did not want to take Adaeze to the scan clinic.

Mrs Amadi waited anxiously as Chinwe packed her car and walked into the sitting room.

'so what sex is it? Mrs Amadi could barely wait for Chinwe to sit down.

'mum, why are you so anxious 'she asked laughing.

'tell me it's a boy 'Mrs Amadi said.

'mum, sorry to burst your bubble, it's a little sister for Adaeze 'Chinwe replied.

Mrs Amadi sat down as though hit by a car. She had been praying and God did not answer. Chinwe was having another girl and it was like history repeating itself. Emeka 's mother looked nice but Mrs Amadi knew it was a matter of time before everything can change.

'oh why God? Why not a boy? Mrs Amadi cried silently as Chinwe left.

Emeka knew that Chinwe was billed for a scan that day and had been anxiously waiting for the outcome of the test.

Emeka was the only son of his parents and hoped Chinwe would have a little boy but nevertheless, he knew he would accept any sex.

However, he was a bit disappointed when Chinwe gave him the scan report.

'a girl? Hmmm' he said

'are you also going to be like my mother? Chinwe said.

'I had wished it was a boy. Anyway, the two next ones would be boys' he said laughing slightly.

'OK. Let's finish with this one first' she replied.



Few months later, Chinwe gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. The dedication party was so elaborate that it was the talk of the town.

Emeka 's mother came into the room after the party guests have all left. She sat carrying the baby while Mrs Amadi packed her things to leave.

' baby Chituru, you have to bring a boy for your mummy, did you hear me' she said

'she does not understand what you are saying' said Chinwe.

'she does, children are spirits. She will do what I am telling her' replied Mrs Ige.

'mama, it's not baby Chituru that will do that, it's me and Emeka with God's help' Chinwe said.

'OK oh. You people should pray well. All this wealth needs an heir' she said walking out.

Mrs Amadi who had not uttered a word looked at Chinwe and shook her head.

'Chinwe, pray hard. I know what I mean oh' Mrs Amadi said.

'what do you mean mother? Asked Chinwe

' have I not told you what happened to me? How your father's people nearly killed me till God answered my prayer? Said Mrs Amadi.

Chinwe had heard her mother's story over and over again but did not see how it mattered in her case. Emeka loved her and everything was going well.

Chinwe was determined to plan her next baby and she did. Baby Chituru was two years before she got pregnant.

Chinwe was now working in the ministry of works and both of the girls were already in school.

Emeka was doing very well as well and they had acquired several plots of land to build their own house. They only had access to the company house as long as he worked there.

Chinwe knew she was pregnant this time around because she had planned it so she was not surprised when the

pregnancy test confirmed it. She was happy and knew Emeka will be too. All they needed was two little boys to complete their perfect family and Chinwe was sure it would go according to plan. She could not wait to tell Emeka the good news.

That night, she gave the report sheet to Emeka .

'what is this? He asked

' open and read it' she said with a smile.

Skirming through the paper, Emeka suddenly let out a shout.

'great news so far' he said embracing his wife.

Emeka had been secretly hoping for a baby for some time and a boy too. He loved his girls but his mother had been nagging for a while now but he had thrown that aside. He was not worried but now, he knew things were looking great.

When Chinwe went for the recommended scan at her second semester with her mother who had insisted on going along, she felt confident it was going to be a boy.

Mrs Amadi prayed in her heart as they left for the scan clinic. She desperately wanted Chinwe to have a boy, then her heart will be at rest. From the day that Emeka 's mother had made that statement, she had been worried for Chinwe. As they sat waiting for their turn, Mrs Amadi prayed the more.

It was finally Chinwe's turn and she went in and was examined.

'hmmm madam, the baby is doing well' the doctor said writing down some things.

'thank God' Chinwe said

'do you want to know the sex of the baby? He asked

' yes please 'she said

' congratulations, you are having a boy ' he said

' oh, thank God oh! She exclaimed.

Chinwe could barely contain her joy as she ran out to tell her mother.

Mrs Amadi danced like a drunk woman as people watched in amusement.

'he has done for me, he has done for me' she sang all the way to the house.

Chinwe quickly called Emeka at the office who was so thrilled that he bought some drinks for his colleagues.

'congrats man' they hailed him.

That night at home, Chinwe and Emeka talked far into the night making plans for their little boy. Emeka promised to give Chinwe money for baby things.

Chinwe had bought more than enough baby stuff and yet Emeka kept buying some on his own.

'this bike is for my little man' he said the day he brought a bike home.

'but this is too much. He has to be around three years to ride this thing' Chinwe said

'I don't care. Anything for my little man' he laughed.

The day of the labour was like any other day. It was the evening after church service on a Sunday.

Chinwe went to use the toilet and saw a bloody discharge.

'could it be today? She asked herself.

Her due date from the scan result was two weeks past and though she had been worried about it, had been reassured by the doctor as normal.

She quickly told Emeka and Mrs Amadi was called in to look after the girls while they visit the hospital.

When Chinwe was examined, it was discovered that she had dilated and was already in labour.

'really? But I am not in pains only slight contractions' she said.

'well, expect your baby anytime soon' the doctor said.

'I have to rush home then to bring her things' Emeka said

'that will be okay' replied the doctor.

Emeka left the hospital with excitement. He could not wait

to finally see his son. He had not told his family the sex of the child though they knew that Chinwe was pregnant. He wanted it to be a surprise. He could just picture the reaction of his mother when he tells her the good news. He whistled in joy as he came down from the car and entered his house.

Chinwe knew the moment the baby was about to come out because she felt a sudden urge to push. The nurses were prepared and waiting for that moment as they called the doctor's attention.

'my husband is not here yet' she said gasping for air.

'it seems this baby doesn't want to wait for daddy' the doctor smiled.

'oh, I wanted him to see his son' Chinwe said.

'madam, you are just seconds away from giving birth, now ready... Push gently...' he coaxed.

Suddenly, with a burst of energy, the baby came out crying.

'congratulations madam, what a beautiful girl' he said

'it can't be. I am expecting a boy. The scan report said it was a boy' cried Chinwe

'hmmm, I don't know what to say but check the sex yourself, you just had a girl' the doctor said.

Chinwe was struck by shock and sudden fear. She had believed she was carrying a boy all along, bought boy things, she just could not accept it and she cried and cried.

When Emeka came back from the house to the hospital and heard Chinwe crying, he was afraid that something bad had happened to their child. He walked into her room and heard the cries of the baby and felt relieved but wondered why she was crying.

'what is it? He asked

'I don't know how to say it, ask them' Chinwe said

'what is it? He asked troubled.

' nothing sir, I don't know why she is crying. We told her she delivered a baby girl.....

'what did you say? Asked Emeka .

' it's a girl! Chinwe cried

'but you told me it was a boy' Emeka said sitting down by the bed

'that's what the scan report said. I showed you' replied Chinwe.

She could see the disappointment on her husband's face as he slowly walked to the baby and looked at her...

Emeka felt so disappointed looking at his baby. He knew that, science taught that the sex of a baby was determined by the man, yet he blamed Chinwe in his heart. He had really looked forward to having this 'son' that he felt drained of all emotions.

He barely saw the baby cuddled up in her baby crib. So what was he going to tell his colleagues that he had already bragged for?

Emeka closed his eyes and thought of what his parents particularly his mother would say.

He glanced briefly at Chinwe and as their eyes met, he could see tears in her eyes. He felt some compassion yet he was angry at her.

Chinwe could feel the anger and disappointment in Emeka's eyes as she looked at him. She knew he had been waiting for this day and she felt she had been a real disappointment to him.

They left the hospital in silence as they drove home.

As they drove into the compound, Chinwe could see her mother running out with Adaeze and Chituru looking excited.

'mummy, daddy, where's our baby' Adaeze asked.  
'shhh, your little brother is asleep' Mrs Amadi hushed her as she opened the passenger door to carry the baby crib.  
'mom, it's a girl' replied Chinwe quietly.  
'what! Shouted Mrs Amadi in shock  
' obviously, there was a mistake with the scan' replied Emeka .

Mrs Amadi felt like she had been struck by lightning. She didn't know what to say or do. She wanted to carry the baby but couldn't make up her mind. She eventually carried her grandchild and walked with the couple into the house.

'mother, I think Emeka is really unhappy' Chinwe said to her mother as they sat in her room.

'my dear, you don't need to tell me, I can see it.' she replied.

Mrs Amadi knew that Chinwe would be in a deep mess with her inlaws. She knew that Emeka 's parents would start their nonsense immediately they hear she had given birth to another girl.

Mrs Amadi felt sorry for her daughter for the pain she was about to go through. She had been there and it was not a good experience.

Emeka could feel the venom from his mother when he called her to inform her about the baby.

'hmmm, another girl! This is a serious matter oh. Your father is getting old and you are our only son.' she said

'well, it has happened. Maybe she's following her mother. You know that her mother had three girls before her boys' .  
Anyway, the naming ceremony is next week' he said.

'I hope you are right else, you need to do something, what if it's only girls she has in her womb'

'mother....

'I mean it. Please you have to do something Emeka .'

'like what?

'look for a small girl to give you a boy. You don't need to marry her'

'God forbid! I can't do that to Chinwe'

Emeka finished the call with his mother baffled at what she had suggested. He still loved Chinwe and it was not her fault that they had only girls.

Emeka told his colleagues the news and they were excited for him.

'congrats

' plenty dowry money man!

'you are blessed, girls will take care of you more than boys'

'but who will inherit all this your growing wealth' said

Andrew

'don't mind him oh. He is jealous of you. He is even not married yet'

Emeka could only hear what Andrew had said ringing through his ears for the whole of that day.

Emeka 's parents could not hide their displeasure on the naming ceremony day. They barely looked at Chinwe or the baby. Emeka 's mom boldly walked to Chinwe and told her she was given just the last chance to produce an heir for Emeka or face the consequences.

Chinwe looked at baby Olumati and cried. Her baby was perfect, yet she looked at her with anger.

Mrs Amadi confronted Emeka 's mother and they exchanged some words.

'tell your daughter to produce a boy else, this house will not contain her' she said.

'OK, since you are God! Please leave my daughter alone. At God's time, it will happen'

'OK, that time is ticking and I have already started counting'

That night, Chinwe cried and it was then she remembered her mother's story.

The birth of baby Olu brought so many changes to the family. Chinwe felt insecure in her home and coupled with Emeka 's stance of indifference, she began to make some changes to her life.

Chinwe registered for a masters degree program and got promoted in her office. She began to keep some money aside as savings and looked into acquiring some assets in her name.

Chinwe took the decision when she heard of the plight of one of her colleague who had been thrown out of her matrimonial home shortly after the demise of her husband. Becky had no child in the ten years that they had been married.

Emeka visited his mother more frequently than usual and he was beginning to think she was right in urging him to get a concubine.

There was a great strain in their marriage and Chinwe could tell when they slept together.

Chinwe was scared of getting pregnant even when Olumati turned four. She didn't want to be disappointed and she was happy each month she saw her menstrual flow.

Emeka could feel that he was drifting away but there was nothing he could do about it. Though he had not seen any woman as beautiful as Chinwe, he knew he was no longer deeply in love as before. He needed to do something about it but for the moment, he cared less.



Chinwe knew when she got pregnant again and it made her sick. She was rushed from the office to the hospital and when the doctor confirmed her suspicion, she burst into tears.

'why madam, you should be happy' the doctor said.

'you don't understand the trauma, the pains I am going through'

Chinwe could not tell Emeka the news. She kept it to herself till Mrs Amadi had to tell him.

'how could you hide it from me?

' why not? What if it's not a boy?

Emeka 's mood lightened and he held Chinwe in his arms. He still cared for her. He wished with all his heart that this baby will make everything right again.

Chinwe was surprised by Emeka 's attitude and sudden change of heart.

Chinwe refused to know the sex of the baby for her peace of mind.

She made up her mind to love and cherish her baby no matter what happened and the day she went into labor, she went determined to make herself happy.

Emeka waited in anticipation at the hospital to see his baby boy. He just believed that this time was going to be different.

The doctor walked to him and shook his hands.

'congratulations, you are a new daddy of a bouncing baby girl!

' what! Again?

Emeka left the hospital angrily and drove away.

This time, Chinwe did not cry. She held her beautiful baby in her arms, looked into her eyes and knew what she will call her.

Sarima was named by the Amadi family and friends. Chinwe spent three months with her mother. She resumed work and continued her life as though nothing had happened....

Emeka felt a pounding headache as he sat up holding his head. He had never felt like that for a long while and looked around his room and wondered why everywhere was so dark.

He stood up and walked towards the window. He drew the blinds and saw a figure beckoned to him.

Emeka shook his head refusing to follow but the figure pointed at a spot where Emeka could see some glittering jewelries giving out their light.

Emeka was captivated by the allure and shine of the jewelries and soon, he had opened the window following the figure to the spot.

'this is what you have been praying for, it's yours, take it' the figure said.

Emeka was so fascinated by the sparkling objects on the floor that he bent over to pick them.

'no, Emeka don't pick it' Chinwe said.

Where had she come from? Emeka wondered. He had not seen her on his way and why was she spying on him?

' what are you doing here? He asked angrily.

' I followed you. Please don't be deceived, don't succumb to this temptation ' Chinwe wept

' why should I listen to you? You have refused to give me what I want '

' don't do something you will regret all your life' Chinwe said.

'leave my son to choose what he wants.' Mrs Ige said.

Emeka was confused. What was happening to him? What was his mother doing here?

'mother, what are you doing here? He asked

' never mind. I am here to help you make right choices in your life' she replied.

As the two women in his life tried to make him choose, the figure pointed at a basket by the jewelries.

'your son that you long for is here, you can have him'

'what? Emeka exclaimed.

' no honey, don't be carried away, it's not mine ' cried Chinwe

' must it be yours? , a son is a son. Allow him to take the child.

Emeka looked into the baby basket and couldn't believe his eyes. The most adorable baby boy he had ever seen was looking at him.

Emeka could no longer hold his peace as he bent down and picked the child.

Emeka barely saw the pit before he fell. He was carrying the child and he felt so weak and helpless as they both fell into a tunnel. Dying with fright, Emeka shouted.....

'wake up! What's the matter?

Emeka woke up with a start. It was a nightmare. He could feel his heart pounding. He was beside himself with fear.

' here, drink this ' she said.

The smell of brandy brought Emeka to his senses. He realized he had done the unbelievable. Emeka had slept outside his matrimonial home and had had sex with another woman for the first time after his marriage.

'How did this happen? What have I done? He thought to himself.

Emeka had been so angry with Chinwe, himself and everything that he had driven straight to Ebere's house. He needed someone to talk to and a quiet place to think.

Ebere was the sister to one of his colleagues, a nurse by profession. He had liked her from the moment he saw her

when she came to sell some medicines and supplements. He had playfully told her to get him something to boost his prowess in bed to help him have a boy child. He didn't know he was getting close to her until he discovered that he always called her for advice. Emeka had gone out a couple of times with Ebere but they had not had sex but he knew she liked him.

Emeka remembered how he had walked into her flat crying his eyes out.

'what's the matter Emekus? ' that's what she called him

'my wife just put to bed'

'so?

' this is the fourth girl, I need a boy child' he said

'relax, you will have a boy' she said.

'how, when? Who will inherit my estate?

Ebere held him as he cried and brought some brandy for him.

' I really don't like alcohol, it's not good for me'

'just a little to calm you' she replied.

Emeka knew the moment it happened. Ebere led him to her bed and it was over in a few minutes.

'what have I done? Emeka asked out loud.

' nothing. Two full blooded adults just had sex' Ebere replied.

'I am a married man for crying out loud' he could feel the headache now

'relax, most married men do it'

'I love my wife'

'I know'

'what are we going to do now'? Emeka asked.

'nothing. Just go home and say something happened, you know...

Emeka hurriedly got dressed and left Ebere's place determined that he would never allow what had happened

to him yesterday repeat itself....

Chinwe knew something was wrong the moment she saw Emeka but she could not place her finger on it. It has been more than three months after baby Sarima's birth and it seemed Emeka had changed overnight. He came home late and his breath smelt funny. Though they were nominal Christians, they barely drank alcohol.

Chinwe seldom went to church except for special occasions. Though she and Emeka were raised in the Anglican faith, they rarely participated.

Emeka knew he had thrown caution to the wind when he discovered that he spent most evenings with Ebere.

Emeka never thought he would return to Ebere after that first night but he found himself going there each time.

Ebere seemed like an angel and her place was a haven for him to unwind his soul.

Emeka no longer felt ashamed waking up naked beside Ebere and each time would have stayed overnight if not that she insisted on him going home.

After about six months of having an extramarital affair, Emeka was in a good mood that day that Ebere broke the news to him.

'I am pregnant'

'what?'

Emeka looked at Ebere with a mixture of fear and excitement.

'are you sure? He asked

'yes. You know I am a nurse'

'of course, of course'

'so what do we do?'

Emeka's thought ran wild. What had he gotten himself into? He already had four girls with his legal wife. Will Ebere agree

to abort the baby? What will people say? Especially his inlaws. How will Chinwe take the news?

'say something. And know that I am not going to abort this baby' Ebere declared.

'we will work out something' Emeka replied.

Emeka needed to talk to someone and the only person he knew was his mother. He called his mother to expect him at home.

'hmmm, don't think of abortion' she said after listening to him.

'So what should I do?

' nothing, let's wait and see what she would give birth to first before taking action ' she replied.

' how will Chinwe take this? ' Emeka said

' my son, don't tell her anything '

' you mean that I should not let her know?

'yes. Keep quiet and don't worry.'

Emeka wondered how he could keep Chinwe in the dark and how long before she knew.

' the scan shows that I am having a boy' Ebere told Emeka.  
'what!

' it's going to be a boy, you should be happy about it' Ebere laughed.

Emeka didn't know what to say. He had stopped trusting scan results from the last experience he had in Chinwe's third pregnancy.

He felt elated but could not show his joy waiting for the D-day.

He was at work when Ebere called him that she had been admitted and in labor.

He quickly left for the hospital where she had registered and met the nurses taking her into the labor room.

'are you the husband? One of the nurses asked.

'hmmmm, yes'

Emeka didn't know what to answer. He was not married to Ebere and it felt strange to be addressed as the husband.

'I think I have to call my mother' he thought.

Ebere's mother was dead and there was no one to help her. Emeka's mother arrived just in time as the doctor came out of the labour room.

'congratulations sir, your wife has delivered a bouncing baby boy'

'what!

'prais.....e the lord' shouted Mrs Ige

Emeka could not believe his ears. Finally! He had a boy? He walked into the room in a daze towards the baby crib.

Emeka faltered when he remembered the nightmare he had several months ago.

'this boy is your carbon copy' Mrs Ige shouted.

Emeka rushed to the crib and his heart melted at the sight before him. Pride washed over him as he beheld his adorable son.

As he bent to pick him, he wished that it was really Chinwe that had given birth to his son.

It was a quiet naming ceremony and Emeka was happy with it. His mother had told him to keep it quiet until the baby was grown. Surprisingly, Ebere agreed.

Ebere saw no need to announce her baby yet. She was not legally married to Emeka and she never wanted Chinwe to know yet.

Emeka was eaten up with guilt as he was forced to pretend that everything was alright.

He lied so many times to Chinwe that he had lost count.

Emeka could not believe that he now drank alcohol and had become a chronic liar as well.

Some days, he would skip going to Ebere's place and try to make up for all his deception by showing his girls and

Chinwe special love.

However, it was not long before he felt a strong pull to see Ebere and his son Ikechi...

'I have been sent on course again' Emeka told Chinwe

'wow! That's great news' said chinwe.

'daddy where are you going this time' asked Adaeze

The family was eating dinner that evening.

'my company is sending me to USA this time around' replied Emeka.

'oh daddy, I want to go with you' said Sarima.

'I promised. we all we go soon' Emeka replied.

Emeka had travelled overseas several times for courses since their marriage but never with his family.

'how long will you stay? Asked chinwe

' just two months 'replied Emeka.

Chinwe said nothing pondering on how best to utilize his absence.

Chinwe knew that Emeka kept extra women but she could not prove it yet.

The Emeka she knew now was not the same Emeka she married some years ago.

Though he had not changed much in looks, he had definitely changed in character.

She had thought of trailing him when he insisted that they had meetings some evenings but she discarded the idea when she heard an experience that one of her colleagues had.

Nkechi had trailed her husband to his concubine's place and had confronted her. When Nkechi's husband discovered that she was bent on creating a scene, he had quietly left.

However his concubine and her friends teamed up together to give Nkechi the beating of her life.



Nkechi did not report to work for two weeks because she was admitted to the hospital.  
Nkechi's husband refused to stop seeing his concubine even after the incident.  
When Chinwe remembered that story, she kept her cool and decided not to fight over a man..

Emeka was traveling to USA with Ebere and he did not tell Chinwe. He could not believe he was doing it. His mother had agreed to take care of Ikechi who was already one year old. He was such an adorable little version of Emeka that Mrs Ige was filled with pride each time she carried him. Mr Ige frowned at what Emeka was doing but couldn't say much.

'welcome to America' the air hostess said as the plane landed.  
'finally, I have touched God's own country' declared Emeka  
'me too, I can't believe it' Ebere said clinging to Emeka

The two months spent in America was one of Emeka's best trips as far as he could remember. He made sure to call his girls and Chinwe regularly but his thoughts and attention was with Ebere.

After two months, they came back home and Ikechi was brought back to Ebere.  
Emeka bought lots of gifts for Chinwe and his four daughters to make up for his guilt.  
Barely two weeks later, Ebere told Emeka that she was pregnant.  
'again? I thought you were on family planning' Emeka asked. He was not so happy with the news.  
'I really don't know how it happened' said Ebere  
'how? and you call yourself a nurse? Fumed Emeka.  
Emeka left that day very angry with himself and Ebere. He thought of ending the relationship and opening up

everything to Chinwe. He knew Chinwe would feel betrayed. As he drove home that night, his phone rang. He looked at the caller ID, it was his mother.

'please Emeka, don't be mad at Ebere. She didn't mean for it to happen, but it has happened' she said.

'so Ebere had reported the matter to his mother' he thought.

'it might be another boy. Do you know? Mrs Ige said.

Emeka finished talking to his mother and hung up the phone.

He decided to accept the pregnancy since there was really nothing he could do about it.

' what if it's another boy' he thought to himself.

As he drove into his compound, he wondered how long he could hide his false life from Chinwe.....

Chinwe was now certain that Emeka was having an affair with another woman. She opened his trouser pockets to empty them of any contents before sending them to the laundry.

'what is this? She asked herself looking at the squeezed pink paper that fell from the pocket.

She picked it up and discovered it was a note. It read:

' please don't isolate me, you know I love you!.. Love, Ebere

She quickly took the note and kept it on his reading table.

Who is Ebere? And why was she writing to Emeka? Has she finally uncovered Emeka's secret life?

Chinwe was filled with mixed emotions. She was angry, yet sad. She wanted to shout yet she held her peace. ' She would wait and see' she concluded.

Emeka walked into the house that evening and immediately he entered his room, he knew something was wrong. He saw the note on his reading table and almost slapped himself for

keeping the note.

He had kept some distance from Ebere after he discovered she was pregnant. He was still not happy that she had allowed herself to get pregnant. He was really angry with her carelessness and wanted to punish her for it.

She had called severally but he had refused to take her calls. She had tried to use Ikechi as a bait but he still had refused to see her. She came to the office that day to see him but he had told the secretary to tell her that he was busy. That was when she had written the note and given it to his secretary for him. They had eventually made up when his mother visited him at the office and begged him to forgive Ebere.

'what if it's another boy? She had said

'one is enough for me' he had replied

'shhhh, don't say that. One is not. Anything can happen'

'like what? I already have four girls'

'girls? You are not serious. Girls that would soon marry and leave home' she had laughed

'mama, I didn't bargain to have more than four children' he lamented

'stop whining. You have enough money for ten. Afterall, your father and I didn't have so much but we had five of you' Mrs Ige said.

'but mother...

'don't mother me. Ebere is pregnant and it's not me that impregnated her. If you didn't want, you know what you should have done ' she said.

Emeka took the scolding as it came. He took total responsibility for his actions, yet he still blamed Ebere.

That was two weeks ago and he had forgotten to discard the note.

'how foolish can you be' he berated himself.

Emeka knew that Chinwe had seen the note and he could

not imagine what she would be thinking.

Throughout that evening, Chinwe watched Emeka like a hawk. She wanted him to say something. When it dawned on her that he was not going to explain anything, she looked at him.

'so, who is Ebere?

' what? He acted surprised

'I kept the note from her on your table'

'oh that? Don't mind those silly little girls. One of those office girls that need money from big guys like us' he laughed.

'are you sure? She asked

' very positive ' he replied

Chinwe knew he was lying, and knew that this was not the first time he had lied to her either. She had stopped trusting Emeka from the day he had left her in the hospital when he discovered she had delivered a baby girl for the fourth time. Chinwe could not wait for them to move into their own house. She would feel more secure knowing they were in their own house. She had stopped trusting Emeka and she did not want to wake up one day and discover she had been left out on the streets.

For almost a year, they had been building their own house. Emeka had worked for more than ten years already with the company and they were not going to occupy the company's accommodation forever.

She had pressurized Emeka until he gave in. The house was a duplex with five rooms upstairs and five rooms downstairs. They wanted a big house and they went for it.

Two of her girls were already in secondary school and the third in primary while the last was in nursery school.

Chinwe gave her time to her children and her job and church. Though she still payed her 'class' dues in the Anglican church, she attended another church in between. She had been invited to a church program by one of her

colleagues and had been joining her to worship since then. Chinwe went with her children and gradually became a regular member when Emeka did not frown at it. He barely went to church anymore and cared less where Chinwe and the children worshipped.....

Emeka was watching football on TV alone that evening. Chinwe did not share his love for football neither did any of the girls. They were glued to their barbie movies that their mother sometimes

watched with them at the sitting room upstairs.

It was during football matches like this that Emeka felt the absence of Ikechi the most. Though he was just two years old, yet he always watched football matches with him. He knew it was a sports admired mostly by men.

Emeka felt unhappy watching the matches alone and sometimes thought of bringing Ikechi to stay with him. He knew it was impossible at the moment because Chinwe was still in the dark about his relationship with Ebere not to talk about Ikechi's existence.

His greatest desire was to bring his son to live with him but his hands were tied knowing the problems, that decision could cause.

Midway through the football match, his phone rang and it was Ebere. He had told her never to call him when he was home and he wondered why she was calling.

'hello, why are you calling here' he whispered

'I need you now, I think I am going to have the baby'

'what?

Emeka was frantic with fear and excitement. He looked furtively at the door as he spoke with Ebere.

'are you sure?

'yes, my water just broke'

'OK, I will be there soon' he said hanging up.

Emeka looked at the time, it was nine pm already. He

thought of what to tell Chinwe and went upstairs.

'I am going to see my mother' he told Chinwe

'at this time of the night? What's wrong with her? She asked

' she just had a seizure and I need to go now, see you later '

Emeka replied

' can I come along ' said Chinwe

' No!

Emeka ran out of the house and got into his car and drove off. He called his mother on the way to intimate her of the situation.

Mrs Ige could not control her excitement as she asked Emeka to pick her up to join him to Ebere's place.

Emeka dropped his mother at Ebere's place to watch over Ikechi while he rushed his concubine to the hospital.

Barely an hour later, Ebere gave birth to his child and he heard the first cry.

The doctor congratulated Emeka once again as he came out of the labor ward.

' lucky guy, your wife and baby is doing well. You have a brand new young man'

'thank you doctor' exclaimed Emeka with joy.

'another boy! He had another boy? Ebere had given him yet another son. He was overwhelmed with happiness.

Emeka quickly called his mother to tell her.

' my son, your lineage will not go extinct. You are now a full fledged man' she said with pride.

Emeka walked in to see Ebere with a new gait in his steps.

He was full of pride and at that moment, nothing else mattered to him than seeing his second son.

Okechukwu was named after seven days. He was as perfect as any new born child and a delight to Mrs Ige who took joy in carrying and bathing him.

'mama, what do I do now that I have two boys. I can't hide it anymore from Chinwe' Emeka said three months later.

'what she doesn't know will not kill her' she replied.  
'you mean that I should still keep this secret that's killing me? He asked

' what will you achieve by telling her? Mrs Ige asked

' how could you do this to me, Emeka. Tell me what I have done to deserve this' cried Chinwe

'I am so sorry. It just happened' he replied. He tried to hold her but she shrank away from him.

He had just told her about his other family and Chinwe was hysterical already.

'I am going to kill you for this' Chinwe cried standing up and walking into the room.

'what had he gotten himself into? He wondered. He should have listened to his mother and kept quiet.

The guilt was eating him up and he could not handle it anymore.

Emeka paced round the sitting room and turned around when Chinwe walked back into the room.

Emeka went berserk when he saw Chinwe with a gun.

'what are you doing with a gun? Panic filled him.

' I am going to kill you before you kill me. If you could hide such a thing from me for five years, you could as well have killed me ' she said with a snarl.

' please sweetheart, don't do anything stupid ' he begged.

'who is your sweetheart? She asked cocking the gun.

Emeka fell on his knee crying for mercy but Chinwe turned the gun at him and shot with a loud bang...

Emeka woke up suddenly with a shout. He was dreaming. Emeka sat up trembling from his nightmare.' what had he got himself into? He wondered.

After the dream, Emeka vowed not to reveal his secret to Chinwe....





Adaeze had gotten admission to study medicine and surgery in the university of Ontario, Canada on a scholarship grant and Chinwe could only thank God for all His manifold blessing on her life.

Her four daughters were doing very well and she could not have asked for more.

Chituru her second daughter was almost through with secondary school and her dream was to be a lawyer.

Olumati was in jss 3 about to write her junior WAEC. She wanted to be a chartered accountant.

Chinwe knew Sarima was still in primary school but already smarter than her age. She wanted to be a university professor.

Emeka looked at his children from Chinwe and wondered why his boys were different.

Ikechi was already in primary four but seemed not to be interested in school.

His teachers constantly complained of his inability to cooperate with his peers. He was fighting almost every week.

'what is really wrong with this boy' Emeka asked Ebere

'are you asking me?' replied Ebere

'yes because you are the mother and he stays with you' he said

'that's one of the problem' she replied

'what do you mean? Asked Emeka

' there is no Father attention. He lacks a father figure' she replied.

Emeka knew what Ebere meant. They had argued series of times about their relationship. Ebere wanted him to tell

Chinwe about their relationship and marry her legally but Emeka had refused.

Ebere had also refused the boys from answering his name until he legally married her. This had worried him and he had told his father about it.

'my son, in our culture those kids are not yours until you marry their mother' he said.

' so what do you think?

' it's your life. I warned you and your mother from the beginning but you refused ' his father said.

' I need your help father. This boys are not doing well ' he whined

' can you handle polygamy? His father asked.

Emeka had thought about it already. He had never imagined himself married to two women but circumstances it seemed had paved another way for his choice in life.

Emeka was torn between his love for Chinwe and the well being of his sons.

Emeka arranged all the paperwork for Chinwe and his girls to attend Adaeze's matriculation in Canada. They were staying there for a month while he would attend just the ceremony and return back to work.

Chinwe and her daughters were thrilled traveling for the first time outside the country.

Chinwe beamed with pride when Adaeze walked in with other students in their matriculation gowns.

'mummy, I am coming here too' said Chituru.

'me too' said Olumati

'me three' said Sarima and they all laughed.

Emeka spent the whole of Chinwe's absence with Ebere. He wanted to monitor Ikechi and Okechukwu. He took them to

school and supervised their school work. He was bent on seeing some positive changes in the boys.

Surprising, they behaved better and Emeka began to have a change of heart. Maybe Ebere was right all along? Maybe living together could solve the problem?.....

Ebere had a grand plan up her sleeve and she was bent on executing it.

She had begged, threatened and cajoled Emeka to legally marry her but he had refused. She could not see herself being the third wheel for life. 'She was not a pushover and she deserved to answer Emeka's name' she thought . 'After all, she had borne his male children' .

She had thought that Mrs Ige would support her but surprisingly, the woman wanted her to remain a concubine.

Ebere knew everything that went on in Emeka's family even if Chinwe didn't have a clue that she existed.

Ebere had been biding her time for the past five years but now was the time to strike.

The one month that Emeka had spent with her was the time she needed and she didn't tell Emeka her plans.

Ebere knew her timing very well and she knew when it happened.

'hello'

'hello, this is Ebere'

'okay.... how can I help you? Chinwe asked.' 'that name rings a bell' she thought

' I want to help you '

' what do you mean? Chinwe asked

'I am your husband's second wife' Ebere said

Chinwe dropped the phone as though bitten by a snake.

After what seemed like eternity, Chinwe picked up the

phone.

'hello, hello, are you there? Said Ebere

' yes but I think you have a wrong number. I am the only wife of my husband. Goodday' she hung up the phone.

Chinwe could not believe it. It was not true. What arrant rubbish. It was a prank call, she thought. She jerked back to reality when her phone rang again. It was the same number and Chinwe refused to answer it. It rang a couple of times and stopped.

'well, since you have decided to be stupid and reject my calls, when your husband Emeka comes home, ask him about Ebere, the woman he has been with for more than five years, the mother of his two sons'

This was the text message that Chinwe got from Ebere.

Chinwe read the text message again and again as though she was trying to dissect its meaning. She didn't know what to think or do. She wanted to call Emeka but she held her cool. She waited anxiously for Emeka to come home from work.

Meanwhile Emeka had stopped by Ebere's house to give her some money.

'by the way, I called your wife' Ebere said

'what!

' yes, I am tired of being treated like an outcast. I sent her a text when she refused to pick my calls ' she said calmly.

' you want to ruin my home? Emeka asked.

He was angry and didn't know what to do. How could Ebere let the cat out of the bag?

'but this is not our agreement' he finally said

'I am tired of keeping quite. I want a family. My children need you too'

'you don't understand' Emeka said standing up  
'understand what? Is loving you a crime? Don't I deserved to answer your name. How about my sons, your only male children? We need you' Ebere said.  
'I am going home' Emeka said standing up.  
'you see what I mean. So this place is not also your home? Ebere cried.

Emeka looked at Ebere and regretted starting the relationship. He didn't truly love her like Chinwe, he had come to realize. His love for a son had pushed him into something he had never planned for. He remembered his dream about the child he had picked and tumbled into a tunnel. Emeka could see himself falling already.  
'I can't handle this right now' he said picking up his car keys.  
'Emeka, I have something to tell you' Ebere said.  
'what again? He asked.  
'I am pregnant '.....

'what! Again? Are you stupid?' shouted Emeka  
'what are you shouting for?' shouted back Ebere  
'getting pregnant again is a very stupid thing to do. Two was enough'  
'hmmmm? I am not going to keep quiet anymore. You either go and pay my dowry or stop coming here' Ebere declared.  
'oh that's your plan. You think by having more children, I will now marry you. Is not going to happen' declared Emeka  
'you will have to choose then. I have to stop you from seeing my sons' retorted Ebere  
'you can't do that' he said.  
'don't try me oh. This will be the third child I am having for you, yet you treat me like trash'  
'don't say that, I give you and my sons everything you need'  
'it's not enough. I am the one outside. What are you afraid of? Tell me!'  
This was the first real quarrel they had had in many years.

' I can't do this to Chinwe, she...  
'please spare me that rubbish talk. After all, I am the one who bore you sons that will carry on your lineage'  
'it that enough reason to give me an ultimatum? Asked Emeka. He was pained at Ebere sudden change.  
' you have to make up your mind on what you want ' she hissed  
'its not what you think. I can't bring two women under one roof. I am not ready for that'  
'why? You are not the first to do it neither are you the last' retorted Ebere  
'I have to go home'  
'OK na, since here is not your home' Ebere replied.

As Emeka left that night, he wondered what he would tell Chinwe. He could not face her alone so he decided to call his parents to help him.

'ahhhh, the moment of truth has arrived' sighed Mr Ige  
'father I need your help'  
'let your mother, your partner in crime go with you'  
'my husband, this matter is big oh. I can't do this alone. Please, I beg you. Come with us' pleaded Mrs Ige.  
'I warned you people, you refuse to listen to me. You wanted boys, see now' continued Mr Ige  
'but that woman is heady. She is pregnant again. I told Emeka to look for a small girl, he went for this' ogbongidi' lamented Mrs Ige  
'mama, please don't start. We need to solve this problem not cast blame' replied Emeka.  
He knew he could not face Chinwe alone. She would be so devastated that he had lied and kept this secret for so long.

After much persuasion, Mr Ige agreed to follow them to see Chinwe. He knew it was going to be a difficult task.

Chinwe looked at the time. It was almost 10pm and Emeka was not yet home. She had tried his number but it was switched of. She was worried and anxious to see him and found out what was going on. She remembered the note from the same Ebere that Emeka had denied sometime ago. 'could there be an element of truth in what the lady had said? She wondered.

' If only Emeka could just come and put her mind to rest' Chinwe dialled the number again but it was still switched of. She climbed up stairs to bath and change. Chinwe took out her Bible and read some passages. As she read, she drifted up to sleep.

'you can't take him from me, he is mine' Chinwe said  
'no he is mine' she said  
'I will not allow you to have him as long as I live' Chinwe said  
'then it shall be over your dead body' she said.

Chinwe woke up with a start. She looked at the time and discovered she had not slept for more than ten minutes. She barely had time to ponder on her dream before she heard Emeka drive in.

Chinwe went down and was surprised when Emeka walked in with his parents.

They exchanged pleasantries and Mr Ige cleared his throat and asked Chinwe to sit down.

'I am sorry to be a bearer of bad news. What you are about to hear is the truth. There is no easier way to say it' started Mr Ige.

Chinwe glanced at her inlaws and then at Emeka. His face was down and she felt a foreboding of bad news. She could sense it that her world was about to collapse

'you need to hear this' Mr Ige continued.

' Emeka has a concubine.....

Chinwe listened from the beginning to the end without saying a word. Her thoughts ran wild in silent shock. 'so this was what her dream had been about? So Emeka had two sons outside their matrimonial home? And another child on the way? So, that Ebere woman was right all along?' so, she had been married to a double standard lying cheating man for so long? So, Emeka had been living a lie for more than five years?' how naive and stupid had she been, thinking having only girls for Emeka was enough to make him love her? 'how could she have been so blind not to see the signs or had she deliberately ignored them? Chinwe was distraught.

Chinwe did not say a word. She stood up and looked at Emeka in the eyes and when she opened her mouth to utter a word, she just panicked and slumped.....

Emeka knew Chinwe would feel very bad but had not anticipated that she would be so shocked as to collapse. Chinwe had been unconscious for more than three days and it was becoming a cause for concern to everyone.

Emeka remembered the dream he had of Chinwe shooting him and was filled with fear.

'if she dies, I am dead. She could as well have shot me' he thought

'how will he cope without Chinwe? He loved her so much, he had come to realize. How will he cope with his girls?

Emeka wept by Chinwe's bed each night that passed by, praying for God's mercy.

' if she has lost the will to live, nothing can be done' the doctor said.

'and this will be your fault' said Mr Ige.

They had watched Chinwe fall and when after a while she was still not moving, had rushed her to the hospital.

'my husband, let's pray oh. Our image will be tarnished if this gets out' Mrs Ige cried.



Chinwe had lost the will to live. In a far away place, she could hear Emeka's cry but she was not moved by it. She was very angry and disappointed at him that she blocked out his voice.

Chinwe felt free as she floated between life and death. 'There was nothing to stop her from crossing over' she thought.

That night, Emeka came to the hospital with Chituru, Olumati and Sarima. The girls cried and prayed for Chinwe. The doctor had recommended that her children be brought to appeal to her subconscious mind. 'Maybe it could give her another reason to live' the doctor had said.

Chinwe heard her children cry and pray and her heart softened. She felt a strong pull in her spirit and she entered back into her body. She sneezed and opened her eyes.

It took Chinwe six months to fully recover from the shock of Emeka's betrayal. There was nothing that Emeka did or said that could explain away what had happened.

Ebere gave birth to another boy and this time, she refused Mrs Ige and Emeka from coming to see the child. After much consultation, Emeka payed Ebere's dowry.

Chinwe locked her heart against Emeka the day he paid Ebere's dowry. No elaborate thing was done, but in the eyes of the law, Emeka was legally married to Ebere and her children had a stake in Emeka's estate.

Chinwe's second daughter Chituru left for Canada to study law and Olumati was almost through with her secondary education.

Meanwhile, Ikechi Emeka's son had managed to finished junior secondary. When Olumati left for Aberdeen to study

Accounting , Emeka had to find a school in Ghana that could accept Ikechi .

Ikechi could not stay in just one school. He was finally expelled and sent back home to Nigeria.

Emeka was heartbroken over Ikechi's failure and hoped that Okechukwu his second son will do better. However, Okechukwu's case was the worst. He despised going to higher college after senior secondary school . He wanted to be a football star. He wanted to play soccer all day.

' all this things happening to my children is your fault' cried Ebere one day

'how is it my fault? Asked Emeka

' how can you keep us one place and you stay another place? She whined.

'is that the problem?

' yes, they needed a firm hand from their father. Now see '

Emeka had moved into his new house with Chinwe and Sarima the only girl left at home.

He spent three days with Ebere and the remaining days of the week with Chinwe.

Though the house was big enough to accommodate the two women, Emeka did not know how Chinwe would react to such a decision. The movement from one home to the other was already taking a toll on him. His thoughts were in disarray just as his belongings were.

However, after much nagging from Ebere and the plight of his two older sons, he decided to bring the family together...

Emeka formally told Chinwe and her children. They had to adjust themselves and vacate the entire downstairs apartment.

Chinwe knew that, that was just the beginning of the many

adjustments she would do in her life now that Emeka had another wife.

She found solace in her children and her job. She was determined to make her life peaceful and worry free. The doctor had told her to take it easy because she was on the verge of having hypertension .

'nothing in life is worth your life. Live your life one day at a time' the doctor had told her.

'finally, you have done the right thing I am no longer an outcast' Ebere was happy

'I hope so' Emeka thought.

'my children have the right to be with their father two four seven and you will see the difference' Ebere replied

'we hope so'.....

Azunda was really his father's backbone as his name implied. He was Ebere's third son and was Emeka's pride. Right from his nursery school, he did very well. Azunda was Ebere's delight. She was glad that finally one of her sons had removed shame from her.

Ebere had never felt comfortable that all of Chinwe's daughters were doing very well and hers were not. Adaeze had graduated from medical school and was working already. Even Chituru was almost done with her studies. The last girl Sarima had just been admitted to Cambridge University to study psychology. Ebere knew she had no one to blame but her sons who had turned deaf ears to her advise. Ikechi drove his father's cars and went out with friends all day. On his part okechukwu went to several football trials but was never taken. He had gotten frustrated that he barely went anymore choosing rather to stay at home each day watching soccer matches.

Ebere was happy that at least Azunda was different. Azunda made his junior secondary exams in flying colors and Ebere went wild with joy. As she sang, everyone could hear her.

'He has done for me, he has done for me, what my father can not do, he has done for me' she sang.

Emeka was very pleased with Azunda and promised to send him to America to study if he made his senior exams.

'Azunda, have you heard? You too will study overseas if you do well' Ebere said.

'I promised to do well' he said.

'at least, one of my children will also school abroad' she said.

Chinwe left with Emeka for Canada to witness Chituru's graduation. She nodded with pride and admiration as her daughter made the valedictory speech.

Chinwe knew that she was the 'proudest' mother at the moment when she took pictures with her second daughter. Emeka and Chinwe stopped over at UK to see Sarima and flew back home.

Emeka had enjoyed his trip with Chinwe so much that he never wanted to come back home.

Emeka was bothered about his two older sons and sought for professional help after they moved into the family house. If not for the fact that they looked like him, he would have doubted their paternity. He discovered they were laid back and only loved what they spent their time on, cars and soccer.

The psychologist spoke with Emeka, Ikechi and Okechukwu at length and had series of meetings with them. Emeka was advised to encourage Okechukwu in his football career and push him into that career path since he loved it.

'you know, not everyone will excel academically. This might be his path in life' said the psychologist.

After much talking to Okechukwu, he was enrolled in a football academy. Ikechi on the other hand was sent to learn automechanic since he loved cars.

'sir, your sons seems to be handy persons. As for Ikechi, sending him to Ghana to read medicine because his elder sister did was a mistake' the man had continued.

Emeka was not happy that his two older sons were not academically inclined but He was happy that at least one of his sons was doing well in school. Azunda was a great joy to him and he daily encouraged him to do better.

'now that we are together, don't you see improvement? Said Eberé

' yes, a little. I wish I knew earlier maybe it would have helped '

' I told you, you didn't listen '

'listen to what?'

'bringing us together as one where they can look up to you'

'that's not what I meant.'afterall, see Orlu's children. Very wayward, riff raffs. They don't even greet their elders. Are they not with their parents?

'so what are you talking about? Asked Eberé

' not knowing on-time that Ikechi and Okechukwu were not academically inclined. I should have supported them in their talents instead of shutting them down '

' ohh, ok'

'everyone must not go to the university you know? Emeka continued.

' yes, but at least Azunda will go. I am happy about that '

Eberé was happy.

Chinwe's children gave him utmost joy compared to Eberé's that,he sometimes wondered if he had not made a wrong decision in life.

Emeka was retired already and was doing his own business. He was doing very well and needed his sons to show more interest in what he did. At least Olumati was helping him with his financial records!

Emeka was talking to Eberé about it when his phone rang.

'hello.., yes, Mr Emeka Ige speaking..' he said

'there has been an emergency, your presence is needed'

'what is it? Emeka asked

' please come to the hospital '

' what is it? Asked Eberé

'it's Azunda' s school, there has been an emergency '

' chineke! God forbid!

Ebere had started crying  
'woman, wait let's get there first'  
'my enemies will never succeed.' Ebere cried...

he took an overdose of tramadol' the doctor said  
'what!  
' my God!  
'doctor please tell us what happened' said Emeka  
'your son was rushed here together with two of his  
classmates. One died an hour later and the other including  
your son is in a critical state' replied the doctor.  
'apparently, they had exams and had taken the drug to help  
them' he continued.  
'help them with what oh? Cried Ebere.  
She was distraught with worry. She could not believe the  
person she had seen on the hospital bed was Azunda, her  
son. She had cried and had not stopped crying ever since.

' my enemies are at work. I know it' she cried.  
'madam, this is an intentional thing. They were not forced to  
take the drugs' replied the doctor.  
Emeka wondered why Azunda needed tramadol to help him  
when he was already a bright student.  
'this is one of the problems we now faced with our youths  
and teenagers. The introduction of these hard drugs by  
mostly celebrities is having a negative effect' the doctor  
lamented.  
'students now put these drugs in their juices and soft drinks.  
They even give it to their unsuspecting friends and before  
you know it, they get intoxicated.' continued the doctor  
'but where do they get this drugs' asked Emeka disturbed.  
'from pharmacies. They sell without doctor's prescription  
and even to underage persons' replied the doctor  
'please doctor, will my son be alright' asked Ebere.

Ebere did not want to hear any story from the doctor. She was just concerned about Azunda. As a nurse, she already knew about such drugs and the effects. She was in fear already because her ward at the hospital was littered with one drug abuse case or the other.

'how could she have known that her son would be one of such cases? How could Azunda have been so stupid to take tramadol?

' madam, we can't tell until he wakes up from his deep sleep  
' replied the doctor.

Emeka had so many thoughts running through his mind as the doctor left them in Azunda's hospital room.

He watched his son breathing heavily with the oxygen mask on his face. How could his only hope get dashed? Azunda had been the outstanding one among Ebere's children.

Azunda was supposed to finish his senior WAEC in just two months and prepare to travel to the US For higher school.

Had he, Emeka put too much pressure on the poor boy? Was that why he had wanted to pass at all costs by taking drugs to keep him awake to read?

Emeka was confused as he paced about the room. He watched as Ebere rolled from one end of the floor to the other crying.

Emeka's phone rang and it was Chinwe.

'hello, were are you? She said.

' hello, I am at the hospital ' Emeka replied

' oh! What happened?

'there is a little emergency with Azunda' he replied

'oh no, is it serious?

' I will talk to you later, why did you call?

'hmmm, it's good news'

'I can do with good news now' replied Emeka

'Olumati has been given a masters scholarship' Chinwe



shouted with joy.  
'that's my girl' Emeka replied.

Ebere cleared her throat and Emeka remembered he was not alone. He looked at her and saw a murderous look on her face. He quickly ended the call and briefly told her what Chinwe had called him for.

'your son is hanging between life and death, and you are happy' she cried.

'that is my daughter too, and I am proud of her' replied Emeka.

'I don't blame you. Anyway, I will get to the bottom of all this' Ebere said.

Ebere walked to her son and held his hands. She looked at him and cried silently. She raised her handkerchief to wipe away her tears and saw his hand move.

'I think he is waking up' shouted Ebere  
'what!

' call the doctor ' Ebere said

Azunda was stirring and Ebere could not contain her joy at the sight of seeing her son awake from death.

' Azunda! You are awake! She called to him but he just looked at her.

The doctor walked in with Emeka and some nurses and the oxygen mask was removed.

The doctor examined Azunda and finally made him sit up. Ebere rushed to him and embraced him but found herself flung away.

'who are you and what are you doing here' Azunda shouted.

'What is happening here' shouted Emeka

'and who are you Mr. Man with Ojukwu bear bear' laughed Azunda pointing at Emeka.

'doctor please explain what is happening here' cried Ebere.

'I think it's obvious. The effects of the drugs is starting to manifest. He is hallucinating.. effects of the drugs. ' the

doctor

'no. No. It can't be...' cried Ebere.'

' hey madam, you are making noise here. I will instruct my men to take you to the barracks if you don't keep quiet' Azunda said.

'Azunda, it's me your mother' cried Ebere

'depart from me, ye workers of iniquity' chanted Azunda

'he needs to be transfered to a psychiatric hospital for evaluation' said the doctor.

'oh my God. What have I gotten myself into? why Azunda.. ? Emeka wailed.....

The way Emeka built his house made it almost impossible for the two women in his life to meet unless one wanted to meet the other. The duplex had everything they needed upstairs and same downstairs.

Chinwe had the upstairs apartment complete with her own kitchen, sitting room, living quarters and bathrooms while Ebere had the downstairs apartment.

The two women barely had anything to do together. They each work and rarely saw themselves.

When Chinwe however heard of Azunda's health situation, she decided to visit Ebere.

Chinwe felt awkward as she went along with Emeka.

Azunda was better now and had been discharged from the psychiatric hospital.

Chinwe walked into the apartment as Ebere came in from the room.

'what have you come here to do? Asked Ebere in anger

' what do you mean? Said Chinwe in surprise

'oh oh, you have come to laugh at me! Is that not so!?

' Ebere, watch your tongue ' Emeka shouted.

'okay, both of you are cohorts, I see' said Ebere  
'someone comes to sympathize with you and see how you behave' replied Emeka.

Chinwe already felt uncomfortable with the whole thing but being persuaded by Emeka, she had come to show some concern over Azunda's plight. Though she had not wanted Ebere to be part of the family, she could never deny the fact that Emeka now had other children besides her own.

She had not had any occasion to exchange words with Ebere before and had avoided any confrontation with her until now.

Chinwe stood up to leave but Emeka held her.

'you came to see my son, and you will see him' he declared.

'see who? My son? To finish what you started?

'what do you mean? Replied Chinwe and Emeka

'oh, you think I don't know? Jealousy will kill you' shouted Ebere.

'jealous of what' asked Chinwe.

She got up to leave. 'she shouldn't have come here' she thought. 'why had she belittled herself to this woman?

Chinwe wondered.

'you want to run away. Tell me you are not jealous of my sons because you don't have even one' replied Ebere

'will you stop this nonsense this minute! Emeka shouted.

'it's the truth. She is jealous. Jealousy is the root of hatred and evil' replied Ebere.

Chinwe could not move.

'whatever you do, my sons shall be more highly esteemed than your girls, they are the only recognized heirs of their father' Ebere taunted.

'stop, stop. Chinwe let's go' Emeka had heard enough.

Chinwe was so incensed with Ebere that she could not hold back anymore.

'for your information, I want to let you know know that just one of my daughter is worth more than two of your sons'

Chinwe retorted.

'OK nah. I see your plans. They won't work. I will fight you fire for fire' Ebere said running close to Chinwe.

Emeka pulled Chinwe and they hurriedly try to leave but Ebere continued walking with them.

'my sons will inherit their father's properties and none of your daughters will collect chie-chie' Ebere said.

'is that so? my daughters don't need what they already have. As for you, ntor... You don't have any girl. You won't dance the 'mother of the bride' dance and no 'Omugwor' for you ' Chinwe could not be stopped.

Chinwe felt so ashamed of herself later that day. She had not meant to condense so low to exchange words with Ebere. They had nothing in common and there was absolutely nothing that should have brought that quarrel in the first place.

Chinwe felt bad that she had prided herself with her children. They were successful but it was not her making. Adaeze was a top physician with a prestige hospital in town. She was already 27years and the best pediatrician in that region.

Chituru 25 was already practicing law in one of the top most law chambers in the area.

Olumati was doing her masters as a chartered accountant in Aberdeen and one of the youngest at 22.

Her last girl Sarima at 19 was almost graduating. Olumati and Sarima were expected back home next year after their graduation.

'I have bragged with my children, please God forgive me' Chinwe prayed...

'mother, is something wrong with me? ' cried Adaeze

'no sweetheart, the right man will come' Chinwe said.

'when mother? This is the third guy that have left me and wedded another woman' Adaeze cried.

'how about me, Chijioke promised me marriage only for him

to dump me and marry my best friend' wailed Chituru. Chinwe could not imagine the pain her two daughters were passing through.

She could not explain what was happening. She knew these guys and each time, she had thought that they would end up married but things never seemed to work out.

It was becoming a concern to Chinwe. Adaeze was 31 years already. She was educated, beautiful and hardworking. The first time it happened, Adaeze did not feel bad but when Chidi her second suitor dumped her two months after their engagement party, it broke Adaeze's heart.

Adaeze fell very sick and looked as though she had HIV. She became emaciated and fragile that Emeka flew her to Dubai for treatment and rehabilitation.

Now, it had happened again. Barely a month to her wedding, Ifeanyi had canceled everything.

'we have to pray more, I guess' said Sarima.

'we have been praying. See my friend Chiamaka that we graduated together is married with one child already at age 28' lamented Olumati.

'I know, I will tell my pastor to come and pray in this house for us' said Sarima.

'tell your pastor but hope he is not one of those fake pastors and prophets who see unnecessary visions. I will walk him out!' Chituru replied.

Sarima was the only one that attended that church. All her family members still went to the family church and sometimes Anglican where their parents still paid 'class'.

Sarima knew what she wanted and went for it. She was lecturing and the youngest in her department at the state college of education and planning for her PhD already.

One of her colleagues had introduced her to the church and she loved it.

'but you people should also know that marriage is not everything. You need to find fulfillment in God not a man'

Sarima said

'we know madam pastor' replied barrister Chituru  
'you people need to give your lives to Christ and have a personal relationship with God. With him nothing is impossible' Sarima continued.

'we know oh, don't preach to us. You are our junior' protested Olumati.

Sarima prayed that her sisters will found Christ as she had done and have peace. She had also preached to her father and mother. She knew they were Christians but they still had not repented in so many ways.

Sarima decided to bring her pastor to her family. 'perhaps they will listen to him better than me' she thought.. .

Sarima brought pastor Gideon to the house. He was a simple man with no airs about him. He came along with his wife and some youths from the church.

Sarima had told pastor Gideon about her family and sisters in particular.

'there is nothing that is impossible with God' he had said.

'Amen'

'you just need to accept God's word in its totality. If He said it, it is settled' he continued.

'I believe. It's just my family. They don't really believe. They feel something is wrong somewhere' Sarima side.

'I can understand. You know here in our world, we believe so much in diabolical powers more than in the power of God' pastor Gideon said

Chinwe and Emeka were present in the family prayers as well as the four girls.

Pastor Gideon preached a simple message of salvation to the family. He made an altar call and all the family members rededicated their lives to God.

'now that you have given your life to christ, the devil has no say in your lives. Give the devil no room to operate. Stand your ground'

'pastor, thank you so much for your time. God bless you for coming' Emeka said

'it's my duty, my calling to point men back to God' replied pastor Gideon

'please pray for our family, especially my daughters' replied chinwe.

Chinwe narrated how three of her daughters have had heartbreaks and how it had been like that for a while.

Pastor Gideon listened as though he had not heard anything about it from Sarima.

'they will all get married at the appointed time because the Bible declares that' none shall lack their mate' he replied.

'yes pastor, but all my mates are getting married one after the other' chipped in Adaeze

'my dear, it may be delayed but not denied' pastor Gideon said...

The pastor and his group stood up to pray with Emeka and his family. Pastor Gideon instructed one of the youth to lead them in worship songs and everyone began to sing along. Pastor Gideon lifted up his voice and prayed.

' our father, we know you love so much because you first loved us. You take pleasure in our prosperity in all areas of life and we are grateful for that. Now oh lord show forth your mercy upon this family....

As he continued to pray, the atmosphere changed and he and his team began to worship and pray in the spirit.

' I hear the lord speaking to my spirit' pastor Gideon said.

Adaeze lifted her eyes to Chituru and they made eye contacts as if to say 'here we go with these pastors'

'no enchantment against Isreal shall stand' says the lord. He makes diviners and sorcerers to go mad for our sakes. God

says I should tell you this ' pastor Gideon said  
' amen, I receive it' shouted Sarima.  
Chituru and Olumati looked at Sarima in confusion.

Pastor Gideon continued praying and finally brought out his anointing oil. The other three girls cringed when he dabbed their foreheads with oil but not Sarima. She was used to such stuff.

As they finished praying and brought out some refreshments to eat, there was a sudden commotion from downstairs...

' ehhehhh, ehhehhh, my head oh'

'I can't see, somebody help me'

The shout was coming from the downstairs apartment.

The praying party stopped their talk so they could hear what the noise was all about.

'ehhehhh, please somebody help me, I can't see oh'

Emeka rushed down with some of the people upstairs. It was Ebere held by Okechukwu.

'what is happening here? demanded Emeka.

' dad, I can't explain. I was here in the sitting room watching soccer and mummy was watching television in her room and suddenly she started shouting ' replied Okechukwu

' Ebere what is it? Asked Emeka

'help me, I can't see and strange things are crawling all over my body' Ebere cried scratching her body frantically.

'please go and call pastor Gideon here. I think this requires prayer' shouted Emeka.

Pastor Gideon was called and after seeing Ebere, instructed that she should be taken to Chinwe's apartment.

'no. I am not entering that house' she shouted

'why? Emeka asked

' I will rather go to the hospital ' Ebere wailed



' if you say so. Let's take her to the hospital ' Emeka agreed.  
' sir, this is not hospital case. Just do what I have asked.  
Bring her upstairs ' pastor Gideon said.  
Ebere flung herself on the ground crying and refused to be carried upstairs.  
Emeka was disturbed watching Ebere display. He was torn between obeying the pastor and doing what Ebere wanted.  
Pastor Gideon began to pray and suddenly, Ebere stood up and walked towards Chinwe's apartment.

Chinwe and her daughters were awaiting Emeka and the pastor's return having no clue as to what was going on downstairs.

When Ebere walked into her apartment supported by Okechukwu , Chinwe was surprised as well as the girls.

'what's happening here' asked Chinwe

'God is doing His work here, madam' replied pastor Gideon  
Ebere fell down and began to mumble words that nobody could understand.

Pastor Gideon brought out his anointing oil poured some on Ebere and she shouted.

' yes, I did it. She made me angry and I did it' she said

' what is all these? Asked Adaeze

' she is manifesting' replied Sarima.

'what do you mean' whispered Chituru

'shhhh, later. Let's hear' replied Sarima

' she mocked me. She said her daughters were better than my sons and I was angry'

' what did you do? Asked the pastor

' I tied the girls! '

'what!

Everyone listened in shock.....

'for your information, I want you to know that just one of my daughter is worth more than two of your sons'

Ebere's ear kept hearing these words each day. It entered her thoughts and subconscious and she was worried. What Chinwe had said had bothered her.

Though Ikechi and Okechukwu had greatly improved, they could not be compared to Chinwe's daughters. Though her sons would inherit more from their father's estate according to the culture, she was still jealous!

'my daughters have everything they need ' Chinwe had said and it was the truth.

Though Azunda finally graduated and was working with his father, Ebere was still not happy because he still had to take medications to curb any reoccurrence.

'she spoke the truth' thought Ebere. Chinwe's girls could never be compared to her sons.

Ebere was incensed that Chinwe was right. Her four daughters were intelligent, smart, beautiful and attractive. It was just a matter of time before they began getting married.

'ntor... You don't have any girl, you won't dance the mother of the bride dance and no' omugwor ' for you'

Ebere remembered what Chinwe told her that day again and stood up in anger.

'I won't allow her to have it all' Ebere spoke to herself.

'yes baba, this woman wants to take my husband from me' Ebere said

'hmmmm''so what do you want me to do' he asked

'her daughters are her pride and joy. I want her joy to be taken away' Ebere replied.

Ebere looked at her friend Oby nod in encouragement. She had had brought her to the place.

Ebere had been friends with Oby for a while. They were both nurses in the same clinic. Oby was the fourth wife to a popular politician. Though she had everything she wanted, she had no child for her husband.

There was a rumor at work that Oby used her womb as a sacrifice to 'hook' her husband.

Ebere knew that Oby was the perfect person to seek help from and she was not disappointed.

'Baba, I don't want any of this woman's daughters to get married' Ebere said

'why?

' she used them to brag for me. She said that I would not dance the mother of the bride dance and I won't go for the customary 'omugwor' because I have no daughter ' said Ebere

' hmmm?

'yes. So I want you to tie the girls. This woman will not enjoy them too' replied Ebere.

'OK. I will need some things. You will get four dolls, try and get one thing each that belongs to them, four cowries, four feathers from an ostrich...

' haba, Baba where will I get such items 'asked Ebere

' I have not even finished. One important ingredient you need to bring is a monkey...

'chineke!

Ebere remembered that day vividly. She had gone to the market with Oby to get the items. The baba had refused to buy them himself.

Ebere could not believe her eyes at what she saw at the 'black market'. All sorts of things were sold in that market. She was told that even if she wanted human parts, she would get it.

Ebere tied the small monkey with a twine and led it to her car. 'what an ugly looking animal' she thought and wondered what the baba needed it for.

That evening, she left with Oby to the shrine. It looked like a modern sitting than a shrine. Odd bits lurked everywhere but it was clean.

'so do you have all the items? He asked.

' yes' Ebere replied bringing out all the listed items.

'OK. You are going to do the medicine yourself' the baba said.

Ebere watched as the baba brought out a big mortar and pestle. He killed the monkey and threw it inside the mortar as well as the other ingredients.

'pound' he ordered

'what?

' I say, pound everything together' he replied

With shaking hands, Ebere began to pound and grind the carcass of the monkey with the other ingredients.

The baba did not stop her until everything was a smooth mixture. He took it ,rubbed the mixture on the faces of the four dolls and began to make incantations.

'as a monkey looks ugly, so will this girls look before men. Men will look at their beauty only in friendship but when they contemplate marriage, they will only see ugliness No suitor will be attracted to them for marriage.....

Ebere looked around to watch the reaction of her spectators. She did not know how long she had been narrating her story but they were still in shock.

Emeka looked at Ebere with anger and fear. He could not believe his ears. 'Ebere had gone too far' he thought.

'how could you? We are one family! How could you' he shouted at her.

'we are not one. You have shown your preference for this your wife and her children from day one' cried Ebere  
Emeka knew she was telling the truth. Chinwe and her

children gave him so much joy and peace. He was very sorry that he had married Ebere.

'despite the three sons I gave you, you don't care' Ebere lamented.

Chinwe shook her head to clear them of the cobwebs that had gathered there. You was still dazed at the happening before her eyes.

'what did my daughters do to you. They don't deserve this wicked act from you' cried Chinwe.

'see what my bragging have cost me' she thought.

'I did it to hurt you. I was angry and jealous' Ebere replied.

'but you have it all. The male children that people including I wanted desperately but couldn't have' Chinwe said.

'it's clear that having sons was not a guarantee of love and happiness ' sobbed Ebere

'see what I have caused' Emeka thought. His family was in disarray. He had three sons but it didn't matter at all. His daughters had achieved everything he could have wanted in life. 'oh, why had he married another wife, why had he desperately wanted a son at all costs? Oh, why had he listened to his mother?

He remembered how she had quarreled with him the last time they met.

' are you sure those sons are yours? She had asked

' what do you mean?

'they don't behave like our family people. They are lazy, disrespectful and spoiled' she said

'well, you wanted grandsons, they are your blood' he replied

'I doubt it' she said shaking her head

'mother, but you were in support from day one'

'I don't know what you are talking about. I told you to look for a young small girl...

' mother, you are making me angry 'he retorted

That was several years ago. He had walked his mother out

of his house that day and regretted ever listening to her. They had not had a cordial relationship for those years because of Ebere.

Emeka knew his mother would hear of the latest development.

Adaeze and her sisters watched the drama unfolding before their eyes with mixed feelings.

Sarima felt a great relief that she and her sisters had been freed from whatever had held them bound.

'will you take this man to be your lawful wedded husband' the pastor asked

'yes, I do' replied Olumati

'through sickness to health?

' yes I do'

'from poverty to prosperity?

' yes I do'

'and do you Eze take Olumati to be your lawful wedded wife? Asked the pastor

' yes I do'

'through sickness to health?

' I do

'from poverty to prosperity?'

'yes I do'

'till death do you part?

' yes I do'

'with the power vested in me by the church, I do hereby pronounce you husband and wife. You may now kiss the bride'

Sarima watched on with joy as her sister Olumati was kissed by her husband Eze.

This was the third wedding in her family over the past six months.

Adaeze and Chituru got married over a space of three months.

Sarima could not explain the speed at which it all happened. After the prayers and confession by Ebere, things took a new turn for the family.

Emeka reported the matter formally to both his family and Ebere's family.

After Ebere was discharged from the hospital, she was sent packing and her marriage with Emeka dissolved. Emeka's three sons were his and part of his family.

Dr Obinna married Adaeze shortly after the incident. They had studied together in Canada. After their wedding, they relocated to Canada.

The day of Chituru's wedding was the talk of the town. She got married to a politician who was also a lawyer. The place was filled to capacity and Chinwe beamed with pride as she came out to dance the mother of the bride dance.

'Nne oma, beautiful mother of a beautiful bride! Chinwe was hailed and given accolades as she danced. She beamed with pride and happiness. This was her second dance. One for each daughter that had gotten married.

Now, Olumati was leaving with her husband to united Kingdom where he lived.

'mother, you will come for' Omugwor in the UK ' laughed Olumati

' yes my daughter' laughed Chinwe

'how about me' asked Emeka

'don't be silly dad, it's for women only' replied Sarima

'such silly culture should be abolished' Emeka said.

'you are just jealous. I will be going to Canada, UK, Abuja and Sarima.... where will I come for you? ' Chinwe laughed.

Sarima shook her head. It was good to see her mother happy again. Sarima was not in a hurry to get married. She still had a PhD to run and she was quite young even if her two grandmothers refused.

Mrs Ige was now a frequent visitor to the house. She had begged Chinwe for forgiveness and had featured in all the three weddings in the family.

As Sarima watched, she saw her maternal grandmother speaking to Olumati and her husband.

Mrs Amadi loved to admonish her grandchildren.

'don't allow anyone to interfere in your marriage' Mrs Amadi said

'yes ma'

'remember, a child is a child no matter the sex...' she continued

Sarima needed no one to tell her that. Her parents story said it all. No sex of a child is superior to the other. Their upbringing and the values placed on them, is what mattered !....



The end