

The Unloved Wife: *Agony of Polygamy*

Rita O. Okeah



**Cover by BBcreative
Designs**

This is a true life story. This is my story. I want to share my story because my heart is full. I never saw it coming. My home was blessed. I had four children, two boys and two girls. My husband loved me (so I thought) and we had enough to take care of our needs. My children were healthy and doing well in school and my husband had put me in a fashion house to learn a trade which I finished and he established my own outfit for me. Things were really looking good. Each day I woke up thanking God for my wonderful family. How could I have known that things will never be the same in a short while? Oh! I never had any inkling that my life was about to take a new course forever. It started like this.....

Let's start up a new business', my husband told me. The money we had saved in our joint account had grown and unused in the bank. Why not? I thought. After all, our kids were growing and we will need to send them to college and all. It was a good idea, so I agreed. The next day, my husband came in and sat down and we began to talk. I suggested we start a bakery business but he already had what he wanted us to do... A beer parlor! I couldn't believe it! Why a beer parlor? I asked? Apparently, some of his friends owned beer parlors and were making a lot of money from it. I couldn't believe my ears. I knew a little about such a business and from the little I was able to gather, it was a place of chaos, a place of Sodom and Gomorrah, a place where men and women forget who they are, toying with their destinies and other people's destiny. I felt no peace with this kind of business. I already had my dress making business and with four children, I had enough to handle already. I told my husband to hold on a little while we see if there won't be something better we could do.

My mother in law came that day and my kids and I received her well as usual. She had bought some traditional snacks on her way. When my husband came from work, we all dug into these traditional delicacies and ate. I made the spare room for her and in the night before she slept, she called me and asked me how we were faring and hope all was well and I replied her in the affirmative. As I left her room, she asked me to call my husband for her which I did and went to prepare for bed. I never knew what they discussed as my husband came in later still looking cheerful and happy. The next day, my husband came back from work and had to go to our business place alone as I had to stay at home with his mother. I didn't like the idea but I didn't want to make mama feel she was not welcomed. I made her feel like a queen, cooked her favorite dishes and even made some good blouses for her. The third day after her visit, she insisted in visiting the business place and my husband took both of us with him. My mother in law was impressed with the place and the crowd she saw. She talked with my husband's relatives working there and they told her it that business was doing great and soon her son was going to be extremely rich. Both of us laughed as we sat down to be served some drinks and roasted meat. As we ate, she observed some group of men and young girls at a corner as they laughed and ate.

'Those men look too old to be married to those girls' she said..... That day marked a turning point in my husband's behavior. My husband began to keep late-night so that he came home after I and the kids were asleep. He snuck in with his keys and as soon as his head touched the pillow, he was sound asleep. There was no way to even talk with him because early the next morning, he was off to work. I couldn't take it any longer so I decided to go to the business place. This was a month later. I waited for him to leave that day and after about an hour and instructing the maid on

what to do; I got into a cab on my way to the place. On getting to our business place, I didn't see my husband's car so I entered and enquired after him. After much persuasion, my husband's relatives told me that he just left with a lady. I sat down shocked as they began to tell me what their brother had been doing. They were ashamed of his behavior because they really respected him and never expected such from him. I asked them to tell me where the lady lived but they said they didn't know. However, they told me that my husband normally stays at least an hour in the bar before leaving with the lady to her house. And that if I wanted to know the lady, I should be there the next day at a particular time. I had to go home that day devastated. No wonder my husband had been acting so strange, I thought as I left for the house. That night, I was up waiting for my husband to come home so we could talk but guess what! He didn't show up. For the first time since our marriage, my husband slept outside our matrimonial home. That was when it dawned on me that I was in a big mess and it all happened under my nose....

My husband never showed up in the morning and I was really fuming on the inside when he finally came back from work the following evening.

'how are you my wife ' he asked me

' fine'

'daddy, daddy ' the youngest of our children said climbing into his laps.

'So what happened that you didn't come back home yesterday? 'I asked 'my wife, things are so hectic over there and I had to stay over to oversee it' I seethed with anger as I clearly told him that I had gone there yesterday and didn't

see him. I actually confronted him and asked him why he was lying. He was so surprised that he couldn't say a thing. He knelt down and began to beg me to forgive him.

'Sweetheart, it won't happen again. I don't mean to hurt you and it was really nothing. I will stop visiting her. That day, my husband did not visit our business place and he behaved like a perfect gentleman. I really didn't believe him but I wanted to give him a second chance. But was I in for a big surprise?...

That whole week, my husband behaved very well. He even took the children and me out for fun and sightseeing. I forgave him and things returned to normal. That weekend, he went with me to our business place and we both looked at the books and had a talk with the workers. He appointed one of his relatives to manage the place since we had agreed that he will visit there only one day a week with me in toll. As he continued talking with them, I left for the kitchen to see how the cook was faring. We soon were attracted by someone shouting . I and the cook rushed out to see a lady shouting hysterically.

'Do you think you can just abandon me? She said.

'Calm down, you are creating a scene 'replied my husband.

"I will shout so the whole world will hear' she continued.

'What is happening here' I enquired

'nothing ' my husband said.

'you won't go anywhere until you tell me what I need to know 'the lady said.

'What is the meaning of this? I asked. I was getting upset already.

'For your information, I am your husband's girlfriend " what!

That was when it dawned on me that I was actually meeting the lady that my husband had been spending his time with. I looked at her and I could imagined what my husband saw in her. She was young, slim, of average height and pretty. This was not surprising to me because my husband loved beautiful women which were why he married me. As I looked at my husband for an explanation, I knew within myself that the lady before me could never compete with me in any area.

'Hmmm, I can explain

'explain what? Interrupted the lady, 'after all you promised, you abandoned me for one week to be with your family. How about me?

'Young lady, do you realize that this man is married 'She looked at me disdainful and said something that changed the course of all our lives.

" For your information, I love your husband and I am already pregnant for him' she said. I didn't know when I slapped her. I only realized it when my husband held me back and the lady went hysterical. She ran and got an empty beer bottle, broke it and held the remaining part threateningly towards me. My husband's relatives and some customers took the lady out and my husband took me home. On my way home, I could not believe what I had just heard. Could it be true? I glanced at my husband as he drove the car if I could conjure what was in his mind. I couldn't wait to get to the house. As soon as we got home, I turned to him and asked him bluntly.

'Tell me, that lady was lying? I said

'I am sorry, it's true. She is pregnant 'he said

'Why' I cried.

'I am very sorry '

' you are not sorry, you were never sorry. When you started flirting around you should have known this will happen '

' I am truly sorry ', I was with her that night trying to make her see reason. She has refused to terminate the pregnancy' he replied

'oh really? Were you not the one that said we should have just four children so that we could give them all they need and make our lives comfortable? Were you not the one who asked me to take contraceptives which I have done for the past four years? I asked.

How some men could be so selfish I thought. After I gave birth to my last son, I and my husband had gone to the family planning unit to decide on the right contraceptives to take. We were educated on the different types and how they were administered. The nurse told us that if we were sure we didn't want more children, then my husband should go for a vasectomy but he refused that it will make him feel less a man. That day, we agreed on the injections for me and there and then it was administered. However three months into it, I noticed I had heavy bleeding during my periods and had to return to the hospital. After examining me, they change the contraceptives to mini pills which I had been taking for more than three years.

I couldn't believe that after going through so much trouble to stop us from getting another child; my husband would be so heartless and careless to have a baby outside wedlock. I ran into my room and came out with the packets of pills. 'Since you have decided that you want more children, be

ready because I would not continue with this pills.'I said as I threw them into the trash. That night, my husband begged and begged me to understand. He said that it was a mistake and he was not truly sure that the pregnancy was his and that I should forgive him. We talked far into the night, trying to fix the mess he had gotten us into. I could no longer cry but faced reality. He promised me that I was the one he loved and if the lady chose to keep the baby, it won't change a thing. He would take care of the child but have nothing more to do with the lady. He promised to buy me a car and so many other things which at that time I foolishly believed. That night we were so exhausted that I allowed him into my bed.

The news of Candy's pregnancy got home. I was to find out her name was Candy. My husband's relatives that went home for Christmas told my mother in law and soon the whole community heard that my husband had a concubine expecting a child for him. I was not surprised when my mother in law visited us. She stayed with us for three days without mentioning the incidence until she went out with my husband one evening and came back. That evening, she called my husband and me for a meeting. It was an awkward moment because my husband and I were still in a strained relationship. After that night, things had not returned to how it used to be from the beginning. I knew he still visited Candy and I had confronted him several times and he always told me that he goes to check on the baby.

'My children, I have heard what happened 'my mother in law started. She went on to say she had gone to see Candy and she had also talked with her.

'Mama, how will you do that? I was furious at her. How could she go and see Candy. This was like supporting what her son did.

'Calm down, let her finish' my husband said. She admonished us to live in peace and that since the lady was elsewhere, it would not be a problem for me. After all, after having the baby, that chapter will be closed. This made me to laugh. Now, she was only pregnant and she calls my husband regularly with one flimsy excuse or the other. When she eventually gives birth, I have wondered how it will be. As I listened to my mother in law talk, I could only shake my head in anger.

'Mama, I think you are supporting your son and that lady. This is not good. That lady wants to ruin my marriage '

' not at all, she is a peaceful person, very respectful and from what I saw.... '

' What! What did you see 'mama I don't believe this! I was shouting really mad. My mother in law liked the lady. I couldn't believe it. So instead of her to help my husband see his wrong and how to help our marriage, she was putting more fuel in the already heated fire. My husband tried to calm me down but I refused.

'Mama, we have four children already, two boys and two girls, what else are we looking for. We need to take care and give them the best in life 'I said

' that will not be a problem, there is enough money to do that 'she replied

' I see that you are supporting your son's actions'I said

'Well, what has happened, has happened. We can't change it' she said

'really ' I asked

' yes. It can't be changed. Try and get used to it. After all, your husband has so much money. You alone cannot finish it ' she said.

'What? '

' can you and the children finish all the money my son makes? She asked. I stared at my mother in law in disbelief! So this was her plan? How could she think that my children and I were too small to finish her son's wealth? So by supporting another woman to have a child for the son, the wealth will be evenly distributed? From that moment onwards, I had little respect for her....

My mother in law's visit ushered in so many problems. As soon as she left, my husband's confidence grew. Sometimes he told me he was going to see Candy and other times he never said anything and some evenings he didn't return home. One evening the business manager came home and complained about the huge withdrawals my husband had made to rent a new apartment for Candy. He had come because the business needed some money. That same week, I discovered that I was pregnant. The day I had thrown my contraceptive pills away and allowed my husband on my bed had been a mistake. Though I had told him that I was going to have more children to spite him, I had not meant it. As I returned from the clinic that day, I was utterly depressed. As soon as my husband came back from work that day, I told him and he kept silent for a while before speaking to me.

'How did it happen 'he finally asked.

'Please don't ask me'I replied.

'So what are you going to do about it 'he asked

'what do you mean? What sort of question is that? I replied

'is it wise to keep it, you know Candy is... ..

'Please I don't want to hear that name, I am keeping this baby. After all, your mother said that you are very wealthy 'I retorted. I was determined to keep the baby. My husband must have gotten a little bit sober because he didn't leave the house that weekend. He mopped about the house like someone in a dream and became irritable to the children. Two months into the pregnancy, I had a slight pain in my abdomen but didn't think anything of it until I went for antenatal. The doctor examined me and told me that there were some complications with the pregnancy and it needed to be evacuated. I cried that day at the clinic and refused to terminate the pregnancy. I left for my house very depressed and wondering why all these things were happening to me. I had no choice but to tell my husband because the doctor had told me the implications should I still carry the pregnancy. I felt so empty after the operation and sad but surprisingly, my husband was caring those periods. Probably he was happy that the pregnancy was terminated. I was still recuperating when one of my brothers came from the village to see me. When I saw his face, I knew something bad had happened.

'Timothy, why is your face like that? I asked

'Papa is very sick and they have sent me to come and fetch you 'he said I knew it was a serious matter but I could not leave immediately. I had to wait for my husband to return from work and see to the children's welfare while I was away. I left with my brother the next day for the village and when we got to my father's compound, we met a crowd crying. I knew then, that it had happened. As I entered the sitting room, my mother rose up and came to me crying.

'Sarah, your father has gone, he has left me"

I never met my father before he died. He had given up the ghost the day before I came. I threw down my bag and fell on the ground crying. As I wept, more people came into the compound to console my family. My father was a popular man who was loved amongst his people. He was a great farmer and a renowned hunter whose hunting skills were sought after in our community and beyond.

'Was he sick mama?

'Just normal cough, so I thought 'replied my mother. She told me how my father came home complaining of pains in his chest which had graduated to coughs. My mother told me how my father refused to visit a clinic but insisted on even going to the farm after taking some herbs. It seemed to have helped him because he improved a little until two days after, the severe pain on the chest returned. He didn't survive it. I sent a message across to my husband of the situation of things and that I would be staying for three days to arrange for the burial and all the rites that needed to be done. As the first daughter and first child of my father, I had so many responsibilities and I was expected by the custom to fulfill them. The second day after my visit to my home town, my mother in law and her family paid my mother a condolence visit and I remembered her little talk in my house. After they left, I told my mother everything that had been happening.

'We heard about it' she told me. I didn't want to burden my mother any more than necessary but I wanted her to know my predicament. After a date for the burial had been fixed and all preliminary arrangements done, I left for the city to

see my husband and children. I was thrilled to see my wonderful children and my husband. Having seen my mother in mourning clothes, I had made up my mind to forgive and reclaim my husband back. Surprisingly, my husband was warm to me and I could see that he still cared for me. He tried to console me but I ended up tearing up when I narrated my father's death to him. I told him the burial arrangements and he promised to support me financially and physically and I was happy and that night we slept together. After my return from the village, things seemed to have returned to normal and though he still visited Candy, he made me aware of his movements.

'When is she having the baby? I asked

'next month' I had made up my mind not to bother myself. I would accept the child but not the lady, I told my husband. She should go and look for her own husband. My husband laughed and told me after the baby is born, he would stop visiting and that he has told her that. He would be sending money for the child's upkeep and when the baby is grown would have custody. I was satisfied with this arrangement and so was not troubled when my husband came one day to tell me the news that we had been waiting for.

'Candy has given birth today 'he said

' Really? I asked with no enthusiasm

'yes. She gave birth to a baby girl!.

I knew about the naming ceremony and I watched all the excitement as my husband organized it with some of his friends and relatives. He had wanted me to attend but I bluntly refused. I was still grieving my father's death and how could I have borne the pain of seeing my husband's child with another woman? I was told the next day by some

of our neighbors who attended how elaborate it had been. It seemed he had put out all the stops for the ceremony. My mother in law had also come from the village to see her latest grandchild and was even staying with Candy for the period which was a relief for me at that time.

The time for my father's burial had been fixed and I had limited time to plan for it. I had just a month left to leave again for the village and I was expecting to stay another one month in the village after the burial as was the custom of our people. My husband supported me greatly financially and I was able to buy all the needed items as I prepared to leave for home. Before I left, I made arrangements for my children's school and feeding during my absence and my husband assured me to help also. I got home and preparation for the burial began in earnest. Canopies were erected, food cooked and some guests came from across the country. A day to the burial, my husband arrived home with his mother. He had come home to bury his father in law according to custom and he didn't disappoint me either. He did all that was required of him with his family and left afterwards to see to his job and our children. However, I was left in the village for one whole month of which I was supposed to host the mourners and family women who had come to stay with my mother for the whole month. This was also a custom I was supposed to perform as a first daughter and I did it very well. It was reportedly, one of the best wake keep they had seen or heard in our town for a long time. I made sure that money was not spared to give my father a befitting burial. How could I have known that I was digging my own grave?..

A day to leaving the village for city, I discovered I had not seen my menstrual period for last month and being so occupied during and after the burial, I had not even thought about it. I shrugged my shoulder and concluded it could have been stress that had altered the circle. However, I was not at peace deciding to go for a checkup as soon as I got to the city. As I waved goodbye to my mother and family members, I realized that I had missed my husband but most especially my children and I could not wait to see them. I

had bought a lot of things from the village especially foodstuffs for my house and traditional snacks for the children. The parents of my husband's relatives working in our business had also sent some things for them through me. I was carrying so much and the taxi on charter had billed me heavily but I didn't complain. The day I got to the city is one of the days in my life that I will never forget. The taxi got into my compound and I alighted.

'I am home' I shouted. I knew that my children will soon be running out as usual to welcome me. As I walked to the back of the car to start bringing the the foodstuffs, I wondered why I had not seen any of my children running to me.

'Felix, Esther, where are you? I am home 'I shouted loudly this time around. Still there was no answer. Curious and wondering if they had all gone out, I walked to the front door and was surprised at what I saw.

'What are you doing here ' she asked. My mother in law was standing by the door and she was preventing my children from coming out. 'Mama, what are you doing here? I asked

' I asked you first 'she barked

' this is my house, what is going on here? I asked. I could see my four children standing and crying on the other side of the room. As I made to push my way through to them, I got another shock.

'Where do you think you are going to? 'She said. It was my sister in law. Where had she come from I wondered and what were they doing in my house.

'Go back to where you are coming from ' my sister in law said.

'But this is my house and I am not going anywhere. I want to see my children 'I said

' which children, they are not yours. Go back to your family.
'My sister in law said.

'Yes, go back to that your family that you are spending my son's hard earned money on 'spat my mother in law. I couldn't believe what I was seeing or hearing. My mother in law was ganging up with her daughter to push me out of my matrimonial home. What had I done wrong I wondered? The neighbors gathered as I began shouting for them to let me into my house but these two women refused. I had to pay the taxi driver his money and waited outside with my baggage for my husband to come home. What was sis Anne doing here I wondered? She was my husband's elder sister and I had never had any problems with her. I had tears in my eyes listening to my children crying to meet me but those two women refused. After a long while, my husband came back from work and when he saw me was surprised...

As soon as I saw him, I started crying and he walked towards me.

'Why are you outside and crying? He asked

'your mother and elder sister has refused me going into my house 'I replied

' why? He asked

'they didn't tell me. They did not even allow me to see my children. What have I done to warrant this humiliation 'I cried? My husband walked to the door and knocked hard. Soon the mother came out to open the door for him. And as soon as she saw me, she shouted at me.

'You won't enter this house as long as I am the mother of my son'

'mama calm down ' he said

' I won't calm down. She has used all your money for her father's burial and still does not want another woman in her house'

'what do you mean mama? I asked

'is it not obvious? You allow my son to be moving up and down to see Candy. You don't want him to bring her here because you are thinking of your children and you having enough to spend, yet you went ahead to spend so much for your father's burial

' What! I couldn't believe my ears. My mother in law had plotted with her daughter to drive me out of my matrimonial home because she felt I had spent too much of her son's money? I stared open mouthed as she continued to rant. My husband forced her to open the door and we went in but soon the sister came and joining hands together, they ousted me out of the door and locked me out. I could hear my husband shouting at them in anger but these women meant business. As I contemplated on what to do, my mother in law spoke to me through the window with a sneer on her face

'the only way I will allow my son to continue marrying you is only if you will allow Candy to come and stay here.

'I will never allow that' I replied

'then leave my son alone' she said

'God will judge you all'I replied picking my bags

'God will judge you too. You are a selfish woman. You want to eat my son's money alone when he can afford to marry as many wives as he wants

' I will never share my marriage with any woman' I replied

'then go back to your family. I have decided that my son will marry Candy whether you like it or not.....

I didn't spend that night in my husband's house. In fact I was in my uncle's house for one whole month. After I had narrated what happened to him, he was furious and told me to stay until he sees my husband and find out why he will allow his mother and sister throw me out without doing anything. For two weeks, my uncle waited to see if my husband will come looking for me but he never showed up. My uncle discovered on visiting my husband that the mother and sister were still in the house taking care of my children and my husband had gone to stay with Candy. He was so disappointed when he came back. He had seen and talked with my husband and they had finally agreed to call a family meeting. At this point, I had made up my mind to leave the marriage since my in-laws were behaving so wicked. However, my decision was aborted when I discovered that I was carrying a baby.

I never knew I was pregnant until the day my uncle's wife insisted I went for a test because I was getting sick and lacked appetite. I had thought it was because of all the stress since my father's burial but surprised after the doctor's examination to be found pregnant. Think of complications! The family meeting came and my husband came with my children and his mother with sister. I was so overjoyed to see and hold my children after such a long

time. At the end of the meeting and we all had aired our views, things were settled. My husband begged me to return if for nothing but the sake of the children. He told me that the mother was leaving for the village with the sister and he was sorry for everything. I looked at the two women and they didn't say a thing and I wondered what had changed. That day, we all left for the house and the next day, my mother in law and her daughter left my house but only for me to discover that they had already sowed a dangerous seed in my home. It was no longer a secret that he had a concubine as he spent time with Candy at will and I had decided to keep my cool. After about a month, I decided to tell my husband that I was pregnant. That day he came home looking happy and in a good mood. After his meal, I went to sit down with him.

" I have something that I have been meaning to tell you ' I said

'What is it?

'I am pregnant!

'What? How could you? He was looking at me with shock and then anger. 'So you actually stopped the contraceptives?

" Yes'I replied

'well, you will have to decide what to do'

"What do you mean 'I asked

' hmmm, just today, Candy told me she was also pregnant!

'What!'I shouted.....

That was the beginning of many sorrows. Our lives changed as my husband was forced to keep two homes. I never wanted Candy under my roof and my husband wanted to keep on seeing her. I gave birth to a healthy and beautiful baby girl and we had a small naming ceremony with some of our friends and relatives attending. By this time, I had intensified on making my fashion business bigger and more profitable. I had so many girls working for me and was making so much money that I didn't need to ask my husband money for myself. I was self reliant and money was no longer my problem. I knew I had to think about my life and that of my children now that it was glaring I was sharing my husband with another woman.

Six months after I gave birth, Candy gave birth to another girl. My mother in law didn't show up for the naming ceremony and it seemed as though the momentum had died. I watched as my husband began to gradually lose interest in going to visit Candy. I heard less about her and he began spending more time at home showing me unusual love and attention. This continued for a long time and I was comforted that my husband was back. Good times, they say never lasts. Candy came to my compound and made a scene that my husband had neglected her and his two daughters.

'Come and take care of your children, stupid man' she shouted

'please leave this place' someone told her. Some neighbors had gathered and they urged her to go. She left after a lot of show and insult on both my husband and I. That evening, my husband went to see Candy and a routine and understanding was reached between them. That month,

Candy got pregnant again and I discovered that I was also pregnant. It felt as though we were competing for my husband's attention. I felt ashamed of myself for getting pregnant again but when I discovered that Candy was also pregnant, I became happy because it seemed my husband had not learnt his lesson. This pregnancy was a troubled one from the beginning. I had to visit the village for some time to stay with my mother. I had never been so sick in any pregnancy like this one and I had no strength to fight Candy or my husband. I had my third son in the village and after a while went back to the city. About Six months later, Candy gave birth to a baby boy. The birth of this baby will change the course of all our lives forever....

My husband was overjoyed when Candy gave birth to the boy that he informed his mother who came to the city as quickly as she could. I heard she slept with Candy at the hospital until her mother came. My husband did not show up in our home for three days planning on the naming ceremony of the child. That naming ceremony was the biggest as far as I could remember in that neighborhood. After the party, my mother in law stayed for a month with Candy and never bothered to visit my house. One day, my husband came home and told me to sit that he had something to tell me.

'What is it? I asked

'you know I love you? He said

'really? I asked 'of course!' He said

'I don't think so. If you loved me, you won't be treating me the way you do. You won't allow Candy....

'let's not talk about that now' he cut me off

'well, leave love out of this and tell me what you want to say' I said 'well, you see, I am having some challenges right now in my office. I may not be able to give you the same monthly allowance for the management of the home I used to give you'

What!

I knew this would happen. He was literally keeping two homes and it was taking a toll on our finances. He had been withdrawing so much already from the business that it was barely surviving. I knew it was a time bomb waiting to explode. After my husband's mother and sister came to

harass me, I had become wise and made sure I took care of my business and made my own money. I had nothing to say to my husband that day because I knew that we all were in for more than we could handle. Barely three month after Candy had her baby, my mother in law and some of her relatives came to my house. I wondered what they were planning as they were all dressed for an occasion. My husband had not informed me of any occasion and so I was surprised when my sister in law called my first son and said 'soon, you would have another mother' my ears perked up and I asked her what she meant.

'Didn't your husband tell you?

'Tell me what? I asked

'we are going to marry Candy today! She replied

'What!

'Yes oh. We are paying her dowry today.' I couldn't believe my ears as I rushed to meet my husband who I found in his room dressing up. 'Tell me it's not true' I pleaded 'what is it?

'Are you planning on marrying Candy and you never told me?

'I am sorry Sarah. I knew you will never agree and the pressure was too much on me from Candy and her family. They insisted that I had to formally marry her because she has three children for me and no man will be willing to marry her again.'

'Why, oh why are you doing this to me? Why Anthony? What have I done to warrant this? I cried. He tried to calm me down but I refused. I cried bitterly realizing that my worst dreams had come to pass. How could this happen to me?

How could my husband marry another wife? How could I share my husband and family with another woman? My life was turning into an unending mass of bleak.....

My mother in law came into the room and saw me crying. She looked at me and laughed.

'Why are you crying? Are you crying because you will soon have a mate? Is it a new thing?

'Mama, what have I done to you that you will support your son to marry another wife? I asked 'you didn't do anything. You see, that lady has three children for my son already, we have to formally claim those children 'she replied ' you want to ruin my home. If you didn't encourage your son, he won't go ahead having more children with that lady 'I said that day, I had a big quarrel with my mother in law. I called her all sorts of name and told them point blank that they will never succeed in bringing another woman to my home. I quickly called my family members to inform them of what was happening. My husband assured me that marrying Candy will not change anything. He was not bringing her to the house but she will keep on staying in the rented apartment and there wouldn't be any friction as things will continue as they had always been. As they left that day, I felt a big loss inside of me. I had that sinking feeling that the tide had changed and it changed against me. As I looked outside the window, I saw the sun set and I took it as an omen that the sun had set in my life. Oh! I had never been true of that day as far as I could remember in my life.....

My husband was a polygamist and it was official. They had done the traditional rites and Candy was now lawfully married to my husband and her three children were officially

my husbands'. I watched as gradually, my home disintegrated before my eyes. My husband literally became a changed man, different from the man I got married to. He spent four days of the week with Candy and another four days with me. His clothes were divided between the two homes he kept and if my children needed anything from him, they had to wait for when he was going to be with us. One thing I hated was that Candy never allowed me to be at peace even in the few days I had with my husband. She made sure she had one problem or the other to seek my husband's attention. I could not believe that my marriage had deteriorated to this level. I contemplated leaving and focusing on my business but after series of talk with my mother and some friends with my pastor, I decided to stay on. I felt so unloved and uncared for that the days my husband spent with us was merely a routine.

He had nothing to offer me as far as I was concerned because the business was on the verge of closing down. Candy had nothing doing and the running of her home fell solely on my husband. I heard from a reliable source that my husband had to enroll her to learn dress making. I was so angry with my husband for doing that I confronted him.

'You know that is my line of business, why will you send your second wife to do same? I fumed 'since you are doing so well, I felt it's a good option for her too' he replied 'no, it's not. You want us to compete? I replied I was not happy at all. I knew of polygamous homes that things were never at peace and lots of problems emanating from decisions made. I was still content that I had no contact or close association with Candy because she stayed in a different house and location from me. We hardly crossed paths unless she decides to come to my home with one flimsy excuse or the other. One day, my husband came home and told me that he had decided to close down the business. It was not a

surprise to me since I had envisaged it. He hardly visited the place and there was not enough money to keep it running. With the business closed, we all had to rely on his salary especially for the children's school and well being. I was carefully studying the situation of things and making my own plans. I noticed that my husband stayed more at home than necessary and I was not surprised to get a visit from Candy.

'So you want them to throw me out? She shouted

'What is it again? My husband asked

'don't play ignorant. You are owing rent and instead of you to think of how to raise the money, you came to hide here' she said. From my room, I could barely hold my laughter. So this was why my husband had been around for a while? My mother in law should come and see how her son's wealth has grown, I mused. I was roused from my thoughts by Candy's words.

'I give you one week. If you don't come and pay the rent, I will pack my things and come and stay here 'she said walking away. As she left, I confronted my husband and told him to do something because I was not going to allow Candy into my home. Did I talk too soon?...

My husband left for the village and came back with the mother and his sister after three days. I was surprised to see them and equally surprised that they had chosen to stay in my house. That night, my mother in law called me into the sitting room with my husband and his sister.

'My wife, we came here for a reason 'she said

' what reason ma? I asked.

'Your husband has asked us to come and plead on his behalf
'she said ' what happened? I asked.

'You know, things are not like before. Things are not working well in his office and the business has died, so money is... '

' Mama, what are you saying? Is your son's wealth not plenty again? I mocked her she went on talking and talking but I was not listening until she made a statement that jolted me.

'You have to share this house with Candy now that things are like this'' she said 'no way. Over my dead body. It will never happen.' I shouted.

'So where do you want Candy to stay with her children? The sister asked.

'I don't know and I don't care. You were the ones who encouraged this relationship from the start, you supported the marriage and you wanted him to have more children, now you have to accommodate your second wife ' I spat in anger.

'Please Sarah, calm down and listen 'begged my husband.

'Don't beg her. Is it because we are trying to be gentle here. Who is the man here?' Shouted the sister.

'Don't mind her. Whether you like it or not, Candy will enter this house. You cannot dictate for my son. 'My mother in law said. I looked at my husband and shook my head. Has he become a boy? How could he allow his mother to rule his life? They had ruined our marriage and now about to remove peace from my home. That night, I tossed about on my bed thinking what to do. I made up my mind to rather leave the marriage than share the same roof with another

wife. In the morning, I told my husband and his family my decision and as I began packing my things, my husband begged me not to leave, that Candy will only be staying temporarily but I refused. My children cried and ran after me as I left that fateful day.....

I was away with my uncle for two weeks but I heard that my mother in law and her daughter helped Candy to pack her things into my home. I also heard that the house was rearranged. We were staying in a three bedroom apartment. I had a room, my husband had a room and the children had a room. We also had two toilets with the children using one and my husband and I sharing one. My first son visited me on his way from school and begged me to come back to the house with tears. He told me that things had changed as they were forced to sleep in the sitting room. My mother in law and her daughter were sharing my room and Candy had my children's room. She was cooking only for her children while my sister in law cooked for my children. I felt pity for my children but still refused to go back. I was somehow enjoying my short freedom and even contemplated on ending the whole marriage thing when my husband came to visit me. He talked and begged for me to return and that the mother had left and the work was too much for him. I still refused to return back to the house. I concentrated on my business and myself and even forgot that I was once married until that fateful day. I had been out of my home for two months now and I was in my business place supervising my girls when I got a call to rush to the hospital. I got to the hospital and saw my husband in the emergency ward for children. One of my sons had been rushed from school. He had fainted and was still unconscious when I got there. My heart was filled with fear as we awaited the doctor's return. When he finally came to us, he smiled and I breathed a sigh of relief.

'He will be okay. He was exhausted and not been eating well' he said. My husband looked at me with sorrow and pleading eyes.

'I don't know what you want me to do again. I have pleaded with you to come back and help me look after the children'

I left that day thinking what to do. I loved my children dearly but I could not stay with Candy in the same roof. I knew we would never have peace living together and I was not ready for any heartache. The following week, my husband brought some of his relatives and friends to my uncle's place. They begged my family to forgive my husband and his mother. After my husband was asked to pay a fine, he was reprimanded and scolded. They told him to desist from listening to his mother and take decision as a man. On my part, they begged me to return for the sakes of my children and that I should endure the situation and never leave my home for a strange woman. Marriage is to be enjoyed and not endured I told them. I told them that my husband's people have shown that they loved Candy more than me and I will only be the third wheel in the marriage.....

I was forced to return back for the sake of my children. My first shock was the state of things in my home. My house looked so unkempt and different from how I left it. For a start, my kitchen things were pushed to one side, my room was packed with some of the stuffs I had kept by the lobby. It now held some sewing machines and odd stuffs that belonged to Candy. I was forced to share my room with my children while Candy had my children's former room. Each family had one bathroom to themselves. We were also both sharing the kitchen and the sitting room where two of my boys slept at night. My home was like a rat's hole. There was no space for anything. The first few days were awkward for all of us. Candy didn't greet me and I didn't care. If I entered the kitchen first, she waited for me to finish cooking before entering. I did the same too. She was not comfortable having me around as I was too. We barely spoke to each other. Sometimes, her kids ignorantly came to

my room and she would call them out. After a week, my husband called every one for a family meeting and made some house rules. He made a cooking and cleaning roster and admonished us to live in peace and harmony. I laughed in my thoughts knowing full well it would never work. We were all in for a bumpy ride in a roller-coaster heading nowhere. When it would crash, the casualties will be many. Candy and I agreed to work together and live in peace as we embraced ourselves lightly.....

I was willing to make things work but it seemed Candy was bent on seeing that I lose my cool at all times. I had four days in the week to cook for the whole family and for those four days, my husband was supposed to sleep in my room. This also was the same for Candy. In my time, I made sure I woke up early to give food to my husband and children before they went to school but when it was Candy's turn, she woke up late since none of her children were of school age then. I couldn't allow my children go to school on empty stomach so I had to cook for them. I began to notice that she was deliberately doing things to make me pick a fight with her. On one occasion after about two weeks, I could no longer bear it and confronted her. She played ignorant and I had to let it go. We had our first official fight barely three weeks after I decided to come back to the house. That day, my husband was with me in my room and we were talking about my children's school. It was my week with him and we were just lying on the bed when Candy began to call him.

'I have something to tell you 'she called.

'Can't it wait till tomorrow? My husband asked

'no. I need to speak to you 'she replied I watched angrily as my husband got up and went out with Candy to her room. They stayed for more than an hour before my husband came back to me.

'What happened? I asked.

'Nothing serious ' he replied. I held my peace and we continued our talk but Candy would not let me enjoy my time with my husband. She came back the second time and by this time, I was ready for a showdown. We fought like cat and dog and my husband could not separate us. I had never been so incensed with anger in all my life like that day. We pushed down my husband when he tried to stop us and we were not deterred by the cries of our children. When I remembered all the insults, cunning and wiles of Candy I had had to put up with in the past weeks, I could not help myself as I dealt her blows after blows. Candy fell to the ground and I sat on her rendering all sorts of abuses on her as I pulled on her hair. Suddenly, I felt my two hands being held back and when I looked back, it was my husband. In that split second, Candy had the opportunity she had been looking for and bites me on my jaw. I felt raw pain as Candy refused to let go of my flesh. She clung to my jaw until I felt blood dripping down my clothes and the last thing I knew, I fainted.....

I woke up in the hospital with my chin bandaged. The nurse told me that my flesh was literally hanging by a thread when I was rushed in. I spent two days in the hospital and was discharged. Things got worse between Candy and me. None of us adhered to the cooking and cleaning rules and my husband was forced to sleep in his room. We all were not on talking terms and both of us refused to cook for him. I nursed deep seated anger for Candy and my husband for causing me so much pain and agony. Whenever I looked at

my face in the mirror, I felt so bad and I began to plan my own revenge. The day it happened was just like any other day. I went to the kitchen to make food for my children and my husband walked in and took some meat from my pot.

'Anthony, please don't take my food ' I said

' just this meat? So you people want to starve me in my own house? He said

'it's your fault, don't blame me' I said. He left for his room and the next thing I heard was Candy shouting.

'You want to kill my son? She shouted

'what is it? My husband replied

'you want your first wife to poison my child? Why did you give him meat from her?

'Come on, stop that! Said my husband

'I won't oh. Don't you know she is a devil? What! I couldn't believe my ears. I tore out of the kitchen and rushed at Candy. I gave her the beating of her life with all the pent up emotions inside of me. My husband succeeded in removing me from atop her and pushed me into my room. He quickly went back to Candy and I heard him shouting for some neighbors for help. I could overhear them as they tried carrying her.

'She is bleeding seriously? What happened?

'They were fighting again '

' Mr. Anthony, see what you brought on yourself. You have lived here for a long time and you have always been in

peace with your family'

'I think I am beginning to regret having two wives' I heard my husband say. He came back to my room with anger in his eyes and told me that I was too rash and I should not have beaten up Candy.

"Did you hear what she said? I asked

"well, just pray nothing happens to her."

'Really? Didn't I get my chin stitched just two weeks ago because of her?

'I have told you. Didn't you know she was pregnant? " I was shocked to know that Candy was pregnant again. When will this nightmare end?.....

I was not surprised to see my mother in law in my house three days later. She had come with some elders to the house and I never knew what their mission was until in the evening when I saw Candy walk into the sitting room. She had apparently been discharged from the hospital. I was called in from the kitchen where I was and as I got to the sitting room, I could see my mother in law glaring at me. I sat down and the family meeting started. We were both asked our point of view of what happened and as I began narrating, Candy interrupted.

'She is lying, I didn't call her a devil' she said I turned to my husband but he didn't say a word. It was then it dawned on me that my husband actually loved Candy more than me. It was a painful feeling and from that day, I felt I had lost something valuable. My mother in law told me that I was lucky that Candy had not lost the baby else she would have sent me packing for good. The elders present admonished us to leave in peace and that we were not the first set of

women marrying one husband. The elders spoke extensively to all of us and begged my husband to look for another apartment for Candy which he promised to do as soon as he had the money. My mother in law stayed for an extra day before leaving and refused to eat my food. I watched as she carried Candy's children, bath them and stayed with them. On her part, Candy behaved like the perfect wife. My mother in law left and things returned to normal as this time, everyone took care of their own. My husband was caught in the middle eating and sleeping with each woman every four days apart. We were slowly adapting when my husband decided to open a shop for Candy. He told me and I had no problem with it since he was also going to support my business as well. I thought it was a good idea since it will make Candy and I see less of each other. She had been idle and like the adage said 'the idle mind is the devil's workshop'. But to my greatest surprise, I discovered Candy had rented a shop just opposite mine and she was in the same line of business as I was!....

The real war began with Candy starting her business close to mine. She tried all sorts of ways to frustrate me by talking to my customers when they leave my shop trying to convince them to patronize her as well. Most of my customers complained to me and soon, some began to patronize her. At first, I didn't mind since I had so many customers, but when she began to tell lies about me to most of my customers that I didn't really make their clothes but my girls, I began to be concerned. I openly confronted Candy and if not she was pregnant, we would have fought again. One day, as I went to my shop, I met one of my workers talking with Candy in her shop and as they saw me, they quickly separated. I asked my worker when she came in what was her business with my rival.

'She wanted me to come and work for her' she said

'what! 'And what did you say? I asked

' I told her no' I was really shocked at what Candy had done. I thought about it and realized I had to do something before she knocked me out of business. Was it not enough that she had taken my husband from me? Now, she wants to take my business from me. That day, I formally reported her to my husband and he called both of us for a meeting. He scolded Candy for her behavior and told her to desist from all her bad intentions. For once, my husband behaved like a real man and tried bringing peace. As we left to our various rooms, I was glad my business was secure. I never knew I was in for a surprise...

There was massive retrenchment in my husband's place of work and he was laid off too. This became a turning point in our home. There was not enough money for the house and both Candy and I had to rely solely on our businesses. It was

as if Candy had been looking for this opportunity as she disobeyed and flaunted my husband's orders at all times. I don't know where she got the capital but she upgraded her shop and soon had some of my workers working for her. My husband could no longer control her and I was at my wits end not knowing what to do. I knew I could not fight her physically since she was heavily pregnant and I didn't have so much money to compete with her since I was the one taking care of my children's school at this point. I had to suffer in silence and intensified my prayers for my business. God answered me when Candy gave birth to a girl and was very sick for a long time after that. I was not happy that Candy was sick but I was happy that I had my business back. I put all my heart and strength to grow back my business and I succeeded. I was able to take care of my needs and those of my children while waiting for my husband to get another job. Though the toll was too much, I endured but it was different for Candy. She quarreled with my husband and I at all times.

'Stupid man, give me money for food oh'

'I don't have' my husband said.

'You better go and look for a job' she replied. I could not bear seeing her insult my husband even if he had been the one who made the mistake of marrying her.

'Won't you leave the poor man? I said

'did I call you? Mind your business ' Candy replied.

'Are you not the one that made him like this? I said

'you are looking for my trouble oh. Anthony, come and warn your first wife oh' shouted Candy 'or what? What can you do? I asked.

'Nothing now. Are you not the one that made me sick?

'What? I asked 'you think I don't know? You devil! I went to find out. 'She shouted at me. I couldn't believe my ears!.Candy was accusing me of using charms on her. As I tried to digest what I had heard, she dropped another bomb 'I have summoned you for a family meeting '.....

I forgot all about Candy's words until the day I came back from my business place to find my uncle and my mother in my house.

'Mama, what are you doing here' I asked after we had exchanged pleasantries.

'We were asked to come by your husband 'replied my uncle.

'Do you mean you don't know we were coming? My mother asked.

'No, did he tell you why he asked you to come? I asked.

'He didn't say anything but that there is an urgent issue at hand 'he replied. I pondered on what could be the reason as I went into my room to change my clothes. I heard some voices and came out to see. I saw my husband coming in with two elders from our compound and Candy's parents. I drew my husband outside to ask him what was going on.

'Wait and see' he said walking inside. I was not surprised to see my mother in law and her daughter Anne walk in as well as Candy herself. My husband started the family meeting by welcoming everyone and then started talking about the reason for the meeting.

'My junior wife brought a complain to me that I could not handle alone. This is the reason I had to call all those

involved to be here.'

'What is the matter' my uncle asked

'my junior wife has accused my senior wife of poisoning and making her sick'

'what! 'I shouted

' It's true. I have been sick for almost a year now and Sarah is responsible ' Candy said ' you are a liar. Where did you get that? I fumed

'calm down 'my uncle and one of the elders said They asked us for our views and asked Candy how she knew that I was responsible for her sickness. Candy said she went to find out from a source that she would not disclose and that I was also responsible for my husband losing his job. At this point, my mother in law jumped up and began clapping her hands.

'No wonder! I said it! My son just got retrenched from work and some of his friends are still being retained.

'Mama, calm down ' my husband said.

'I will not oh. This woman must leave this house today' she shouted. I could not believe what I was hearing. How could Candy weave such lies to tarnish my image and drive me from my own home? Will I never be free from this dark tunnel?.....

We had a major quarrel that day. My mother was very angry as well as my uncle. She attacked my mother in law with words as my uncle also spoke harshly to my husband.

'How dare you threaten my daughter? My mother shouted.

'And so? What will you do? Replied my mother in law.

'You have been the one meddling in my daughter's marriage from day one; I have wondered what she did to you? 'My mother said.

'That's your business; she has eaten my son dry. She spent all the money he had' she said.

'What's your evidence? You are a very wicked woman 'replied my mother.

'Please don't insult my mother 'chipped in Anne

' just let her be insulting me. I don't blame her. It's Anthony that caused all these ' my mother in law said.

'From the day my daughter buried her father, you have hated her without a cause. Putting silly ideas into your son's head. See where it has landed everyone 'my mother said bitterly.

'If it's true that your daughter is the cause of Candy's sickness, she will pack from my son's house. Stupid woman' said my mother in law. 'You are the one that is stupid. You can't insult my mother like that' I said.

'Sarah, please calm down 'my uncle begged.

'Leave her, let her insult me. I don't really blame her. Like mother like daughter' my mother in law said sitting down. The two elders and Candy's parents tried to bring peace and we all sat down again to continue the meeting. One of the elders my husband had called as a witness stood up and addressed all of us. He told us to calm our emotions and be rational about things. He asked Candy if she had proof that I was responsible for her illness. Candy narrated how a friend

had taken her to a prophet who told her that a woman very close to her was responsible for her illness. The same woman was also responsible for her husband's state of unemployment. Candy had concluded that I was the person and had summoned me to justify myself. I was stunned on hearing all these trash. She had accused me of evil based on what one prophet had told her?

'This is a serious allegation and something not to be taken lightly' the elder said.

'Let her confess if she is not the one' my mother said

'I am innocent. Maybe you are the one responsible mama' I said to my mother in law. We had another round of quarrel and finally, the two elders walked out with my husband and came back after some minutes.

'We have decided to forget this whole thing. Candy, you can't just accuse people without proof. And mama allow this family to have some peace' he said 'No way oh. She has to prove she is innocent ' my mother in law said ' yes oh. She has to' added Anne. Candy's father cleared his throat and started addressing us as he stood up.

'I and my wife have been silent this whole time because we are here for peace. Let's settle this thing amicably. We love our daughter and don't want anything bad to happen to her. My in-laws, let's put our heads together to bring peace 'he said.

'The only way peace will reign is if Sarah clears her name ' replied my mother in law.

'How? My mother said.

'Both Sarah and Candy will swear before the village shrine' she said. I couldn't believe my ears.....

My mother in law was not a Christian though she attended the village church at intervals. She had never hid the fact that she consulted native doctors and traditional herbalists. She even had a mini shrine in her house which made me most times not visit her with my children. She had been like that before I married Anthony which made my mother at that time frown at our marriage. It was my father who had told me to go for Anthony if I loved him. He told me that I was getting married to Anthony and not his family. I wished he was alive now to see how times and situations have changed. I was a Christian I could not believe that my mother in law wanted me to drop my Christian faith and make a pact with the devil.

'I am ready to do it' Candy said

'how about you' asked one of the elders looking at me.

'I will never do it' I am a Christian and it's against my beliefs
'I spat out.

'You see what I said' laughed my mother in law

'leave my daughter alone. You heathen' my mother replied.

'If she refuses to do it, she is guilty as charged' she shouted. The two elders and my uncle begged me to consider doing it and that it was just a small thing that will exonerate me from all the allegations. I vehemently refused to be part of any oath in a juju shrine. My mind was made up and I was bent on leaving the marriage rather than compromise my Christian belief. I told my mother and husband that I could not do it and walked into my room.

'She must leave my son's house then. She is guilty' shouted my mother in law.

'You can't drive out my daughter. She is not guilty ' replied my mother. The elders with my uncle and my husband went outside again to confer. When they came back, they had reached a decision. One of the elders looked at me and began to talk.

'My daughter. This is very serious. Candy has agreed to take an oath and you have refused on your part. We need to know that the allegations against you are not true and for now, the only solution is to take an oath. Since you have refused, you will need to leave this house until such a time when you are ready. This is our final decision '. I didn't want to give anyone the satisfaction of seeing me cry but I cried a million tears inside my heart. I looked round the faces around me trying to read what was written on their faces. I calmly went into my room and began to pack my things. My children came around me crying that I should not go but I had no choice. I told the three eldest to take care of their other siblings and that they could still visit me in my uncle's place where I would be staying while still doing my business. I walked to my mother in law and looked at her with pity.

'You will reap what you sow ' I said

' I hear, please go' she replied. Candy did not wait for me to talk to her. She went with her parents into her room laughing in victory. As I walked out from the house the second time, I wondered when my life would have some sunshine.....

My story spread like wild fire both in the city and in my hometown. I was labeled a wicked woman who had attacked her co- wife with illness and made her husband lose his job

because of Jealousy. My mother could barely walk around the village because of my wounded reputation. She was seen as the mastermind in all the things that had happened. I was not a happy person as things began to turn bad for me. Even my business suffered as a result of the bad rumours against me. Some of my workers left and I began to lose customers. After a while my husband refused my children from seeing me. He felt I was really responsible for his job since I had refused to take the oath. To make matters worse, Candy got well soon after I left the house. All these things pointed to my guilt, that even some of my friends began to avoid me. It became so unbearable that I had to sneak a visit to my home to have a talk with my mother.

'Mama, I am really confused. Things are not working the way I want it' I said 'my daughter, I am even more confused than you' she replied.

'I don't know what to do' I said

'did you speak to your pastor? She asked

'he still insisted in me not taking the oath' I replied

'hmmmm, I don't know what to say' she said shaking her head.

'Everyone sees me as the guilty one. God knows I am innocent ' I cried.

'I know you are, but it has not solved the problem ' she said ' mama what should I do? I asked. At this point, I was between the devil and the deep blue sea.

'Sarah, I think you should do it' she said I looked at my mother and knew she had no choice but to say what she felt was good for me. As I left the village that day, I met a lady

who saw me and spat on the ground. As she passed me, I could hear her mumble.

'Some wicked women who love walking in the dark should turn from their wicked ways' she said. As I walked away that night, my mind was made up and I was ready to bear the consequences. I was going to swear before the village shrine and exonerate my image before the whole world. I was going to do it and put Candy and my mother in law to shame.....

The day of the oath is a day I will ever live to remember in my life. We all went to the village after my mother in law had made all the necessary arrangements. She had contracted and paid the juju priest who was going to do the ceremony. I left for the village from my uncle's house and met my husband and Candy already in the village. Anne, my husband's sister was in the city taking care of all the children. The ceremony was to be done at midnight, so I had to stay with my mother praying that all would go well. I was really feeling restless in my spirit going against my beliefs but I suppressed the feeling thinking of the things I was going to lose if I do not go along with the ceremony. That night, I stood beside Candy looking at the priest. He instructed both of us to strip naked.

'What? I shouted

'you must take this oath while naked' he said

'I won't do it' I said turning back.

'Sarah, please go ahead and obey ' my mother begged. She was a witness to the ceremony.

'No mama, this is the last straw 'I said.

'See Candy is already naked 'she pointed out to me. I was not surprised to see that Candy was already naked. My husband and his mother watched me whispering to my mother. I had to go back and obey the instruction. Candy and I stood stark naked before the priest as he began to make incantations. He killed a chicken before our eyes and circled both of our heads with it while still incantating. I shrank within myself as he rubbed some herbs on my forehead and did same with Candy.

'Today, you will know who is guilty or not. I give you twenty minutes, whoever is guilty will fall down and die.' the priest said while still making incantations. I waited in bated breath for twenty minutes to elapse and when it did and I did not fall down, my mother was the first to shout.

'I said it! My daughter is innocent! '

' I am innocent'I shouted I looked at Candy who was looking down in shame. My mother in law as well as my husband were surprised that I was still alive.....

When they saw that nothing happened to me, Candy began to cry. It was then that my mother in law spoke for the first time.

'Well, thank your stars that nothing happened to you. You are lucky ' she said.

'I am not lucky. I am innocent of all your accusations. I have been innocent ever since I married your son and today is just a confirmation to you of all the wrongs you have done to me' I said with tears. The priest admonished all of us to live in peace and that we should not think of harming each other. He went further to advice us to do a blood covenant that will help us live in harmony. I didn't want to go for it but I had to agree to a blood covenant. Candy's blood was taken from her thumb and mine too. The priest mixed my husband's blood with both I and Candy's blood. He put it in Palm wine and gave the three of us to drink.

'From today, if anyone of you tries to harm the other, it will backfire' he said. We wore back our clothes in silence and left the place. I went back to my mother's place while Candy left with my husband to his mother's place. The following day, a family meeting was called and my mother and I with some elders from my family were officially invited with drinks to attend. My name was publicly exonerated from all guilt and all misunderstanding cleared. My husband publicly apologized to me and begged me to return to our matrimonial home. The elders made Candy to kneel before me to apologize also. I watched everything with tears running down my face as my mother in law also begged me to return to my home. As I left the village that night beside my husband as he drove and Candy at the back seat, I prayed in my heart to God to help me through the days ahead....

The oath and the blood covenant ushered in the devil of hardship to the family. It seemed like we invited the demons of poverty into our home because my husband's fortune took a turn for the worse. There was no way to make ends meet as every means of livelihood came to a standstill. There were constant quarrels in the house either between Candy and me or between my husband and any of us. It got to the extent that my husband ran to the next city without telling me or Candy. We didn't know until he didn't come home for three days.

'Mama Ruth, have you seen our husband? Candy asked me 'no, for the past three days 'I replied

' where could he have gone to? She asked

'I don't know oh. If we don't see him in the next two days, we have to report to the police' I said. The next day, we got a message from my husband that he was in the next city and we should not look for him but either take care of ourselves or go back to our village until he finds his feet. I could only laugh while reading the letter he sent. I gave it to Candy and she began raining abuses on him.

'Useless man, you are not man enough. Running away from your responsibilities? She shouted as though he was present. At this time, Candy had five children already and I had six. I could imagine the heavy load on my husband.

'The mother should come and see the wealth of her precious son' I said 'what wealth? Is this wealth? Asked Candy.

'You won't understand ' I replied. It really was not entirely Candy's fault I thought as I pondered on my next line of action. The house rent had expired already and even my shop rent had expired. I had been using my business money for the children's school and feeding. I visited my uncle and

made arrangements for my three eldest children to stay with him while I take the other three back to the village and try to pick up the pieces of my life. Candy's mother came to help her pack her things as we vacated the house... Candy and I stayed in the village for more than one year trying to survive. I had to start up a petty shop and farming with the little money I had. Things were tough for me and for Candy especially. She lamented each day and began to quarrel with my mother in law at any slight provocation.

'I will leave these children with you and go back to my father's house 'she said ' am I the father of the children? My mother in law asked 'I didn't bargain for this kind of suffering, I can't take it anymore 'she said I laughed inside my room listening to all the talks.

'You are really a trouble maker. I wish my son had not married you' my mother in law said.

'Really? Are your hands clean? Are you sure you are not responsible for all these? Shouted Candy 'are you accusing me? She replied.

'I am just saying. After you brought us to swear and do blood covenant, things just scattered ' Candy said I just listened as they began to quarrel again. I was also wondering what could be the problem that my husband would abandon his family for so long. It seemed so out of the ordinary that things could go from bad to worse in so short a time.. I was interrupted by the cry of my youngest child Joyce as she cried in her sleep. I rushed towards her and touched her forehead. It was as hot as an oven. She had been running temperature for two days already and having no money to take her to the hospital, I had gone to the pharmacy for some drugs. Though she had seemed better yesterday, she was now getting worse. I called my

mother to help me look after the other two while I rushed her back to the pharmacy. 'Madam, I think you have to take her to the hospital. She is not responding to the treatments.' the lady said. I was in a panic already watching my child slipping away.

'What do you mean? Didn't you say it was just a fever? I asked 'I don't think it's just fever, it looks like measles; see the rashes coming out ' she replied. I shouted and called for a taxi and the lady joined me in the car as we tried to rush to the hospital. I could feel the heat of fire seeping through my baby's skin to mine. Her mouth was tightly shut.

'Don't allow her to close her mouth. Force it open 'shouted the lady. I tried to insert my hands through her mouth to no avail. We had to stop on the way to beg for a spoon to try to force her mouth open. It was a futile attempt. I felt my precious baby slipping away from my grip as she breathed her last. My baby was dead? What a black day!

I shouted with a loud voice shaking my child.

'Joyce, Joyce! 'Wake up, its mama, wake up!

'I think she is gone' the lady gently told me.

'No....., it can't be' I shouted.

'Madam, take it easy now' the taxi driver said.

'No, no, no, I won't take it easy. By now, the taxi driver had stopped the car and a little crowd had gathered around us. I kept on shouting for help still not believing that what the lady said.

'Please take me to the hospital. I need to see a doctor. The taxi driver had refused to move. He felt the baby was dead

and there was no need to take her to the hospital. As I wailed, a lady came forward and touched the baby's body.

'She is still warm 'she said.

'She is still alive? I asked with hope.

'I think so. Please take this woman to the hospital now 'she begged the driver. With renewed hope, we entered the car and the driver drove as a man possessed by the winds to the hospital. We got to the children's ward and met the doctor who after examining the child shook his head.

'I am sorry; there is really nothing I can do. She is dead' he said. Those words pushed a nail to my heart.

'Doctor, please help me' I wailed.

'Madam, it's too late. You should have brought her since' he replied.

'I thought it was just fever' I replied in tears.

'This is measles and it kills little babies when not diagnosed and treated on time' he told me.

'I didn't know 'I cried

' did you give her the measles vaccine? He asked. With so many things that had been happening lately in my life, I had not thought of completing the immunization. I felt at that point that the world should just end and all my miseries evaporate. The taxi took me back to my house and I came down carrying my dead child as I cried loudly attracting people. My mother took the baby from me and I fell down rolling on the dirty floor. Onlookers stood watching me in sympathy as I cried bitterly. I was not only crying for my

dead child but for my life that has been a hell since my husband decided to marry another wife. I cried for everything I had lost. I cried for the dark paths I had had to cross, the tunnel that had deprived me some rays of light. Oh, how I cried.. I could see sorrow on Candy's face as she tried to help me up but I resisted her help. My mother in law, who had been called by onlookers, took the dead child from my mother and walked into our compound.

'Why me, what have I done to deserve all these suffering ' I lamented.

' take heart' 'things will get better.' someone said to me. That same day, I watched hopelessly as my child was lowered to mother earth. My husband was nowhere in sight and I had to grief alone. In all my life, I had never felt so alone, so depressed and so unloved. The days went by in a snail's pace, each day more painful and longer than the other. I had enough time to think and I thought about my life. I could feel the void of my baby and I was in a state of great depression. I could barely eat and I could not remember taking my bath. My mother brought her church members and eventually her pastor to see me. After they left, I stood up and took my bath. I didn't know what else to do than to find solace in God. After taking the oath and partaking in the blood covenant, my church had suspended me for the act and as such, I had not been actively involved in church activities. However, after the death of my child and a visit from my mother's church, I resumed church activities. I began to attend a new church in my village and this was my saving grace. My new pastor counseled me and made me see a lot of things I had done wrong. I re-dedicated my life to God and made the necessary changes and really started in earnest to serve God. This decision was to mark the turning point in my life..

The day everything came to the open was just like any other day. We had just finished a three days program in church and I was resting my head on my bed for a while before I began the evening meal when there was a loud commotion outside. I rushed out with my children to see what was happening and beheld a sight that made me put my hand on my mouth. Standing surrounded by a large crowd was my husband's sister Anne. Anne was standing stark naked and mumbling words I could not hear. I had to strain my ears to hear what she was saying over the raised voices around her.

'I did it. I did everything. I am responsible ' she said ' you did what? Some people asked

'I did it. I made it all happen 'she muttered scratching herself furiously.

'What is she saying? I asked a standby 'I think she is confessing' he replied.

'Confessing what? I asked.

'I am a witch, I am a witch oh' she shouted.

'Jesus! 'I shouted it turned out to be true. Sister Anne had gone mad and was ranting a lot of words that we could not make out. Not quite long, my mother in law appeared and some elders took Sister Anne her inside the compound.

'I am very sorry for all the pains I have caused this family' she began. She narrated how she had being the architect of my husband's fall. She had been angry at him for not giving her money. She had turned her mother's heart against me so that the brother could marry another wife thereby destroying the peace of the home. She also confessed to

making my husband lose his job and many other things that I couldn't listen to. I was too shocked for words and I regained my thoughts when my mother asked her if she had also killed my child? She said she was not responsible for my baby's death. I listened with bated breath at all the things I had heard and wondered how I had wronged this woman for her to make my life so miserable? Though she had confessed, the deed had been done and irreversible. I still had Candy as a co wife who now had children for my husband. My child was dead and my husband was still hiding somewhere. Sister Anne was taken to a psychiatric home for treatment and the news flew everywhere of her witchcraft and wickedness. My mother in law formally begged me for forgiveness and promised to do all she could to make it up to me. I forgave her but I knew that things could never return to how they had been...

The incident with Sister Anne brought many changes in my life. Shortly after the incident with Sister Anne, I was not surprised when my husband showed up from nowhere. He had been living with a friend and had just got a new job a week before he returned. My children and that of Candy were happy to see him but the wives were not. He called for the elders to beg Candy and me. We were reminded of the role that his sister Anne played in all the calamities that had trailed our family. After a lot of talk, things were settled. I cried while I narrated to him how Joyce died and he visited the grave with tears in his eyes. After a while, he left for the city again taking with him four children, two each from both Candy and I. He promised to send for us after a while which was the arrangement we all had agreed to. Before he left, he gave us little money and promised to be sending regularly. This arrangement went on for some time and he will visit the village and spend a week before leaving. I was not surprised to discover that Candy got pregnant again. The month she delivered the boy, one of her child in the city

came home for holidays and delivered the news to us that my husband had another concubine..

'Mama Ruth, are you hearing' Candy said 'so what do you want me to do? I asked 'we must not allow it to happen! She shouted 'why? 'I asked

' I won't share my husband with another woman 'she said walking back to her room. I laughed out loud. I couldn't believe that Candy would think she could stop my husband from other women especially now that we were staying apart. That week, my husband came for a visit and there was a major fight between him and Candy. She broke the windscreen of his car and he had to run back to the city. I never said anything because I didn't have the energy for all that was going on. I felt it was Candy's turn to go through all I had gone through when she came into our lives. It was the law of karma!

Candy came to me again after my husband left for the city. She wanted us to go to the city and enquire about the new woman and make sure she never became the third wife. I told Candy that my husband was already a polygamist and bringing another woman will not make any difference to me. She had a quarrel with me and left for the city. My children narrated to me, how Candy got to the house. Candy met the lady in the house and both of them fought breaking most of the household items. Shortly after the fight, my husband came to announce to Candy his intention of marrying Nina because she was already pregnant for him..

All these happened a long time ago but it feels like yesterday. I am now an old woman and my children are all grownups, married with children. I have lived most of my life like a woman without a husband. I have had to share my husband not only with Candy but several other women that

time and space will fail me to talk about. My mother and mother in law are dead now. Before her death, my mother in law called me into her room and asked again that I forgive her.

'My daughter, please forgive me again and again. I made a mistake. You are the only one that should have married my son. See how my son's life went from good to bad. I regret my actions 'she cried.

'It is well, mama. It was not all your fault 'I replied ' please forgive me' she said again.

'I forgive you. 'I replied. Why shouldn't I forgive when Christ forgave me all my own sins and mistakes? I forgave her before she died but the consequences of her past decisions and actions were still much alive. My heart had been broken to pieces by life events and it affected my health. Now, I have been diagnosed with heart failure by the doctors and I know it is as a result of a broken heart. With our children all grown up, I barely see Candy or Nina or even Anthony. We are married only in name as we all stay apart. I no longer have the strength of pursuing after a man or fighting over a man. I had handed over the baton to Candy a long time ago who now faces the agony of polygamy, the unloved wife.....