

***" But when you are deprived of it for a lengthy period then you value human companionship. But you have to survive and so you devise all kinds of mental exercises and it's amazing"
- Prof Wole Soyinka***

I probably should stop drinking so much coffee... .

Getting through medical school is almost impossible without it, but this steady flow of caffeine in my system will have long term side effects.

I should make time to pay my parents a visit....Then again, maybe not, they'll start bothering me with questions about when I am going to get married.

That's right, I am that 'aunty.' I thought with a sigh. She could be your sister, daughter, cousin or friend. Avoiding family gatherings and other social events because of those annoying mummies, daddies, grandparents, Uncle Femi's, brother Uche's, sister Risikat's and Aunty Ada's, reminding her EVERY SINGLE TIME about how she should be married with kids by now....so frustrating!

Even Mallam Bello, the suya (a spicy, well seasoned barbeque beef often sold as a roadside street food) guy asked when 'oga (boss)will come and buy suya', last time I went to his stall down the street of my parents house!

I hope there aren't going to be any extreme issues today....Accident and Emergency packed shifts are the worst..

I was busy thinking about all the different things that I should do and not do, what I wanted and did not want as I was driving to work in my Toyota Matrix.

It happened to be a cool and cloudy day in the middle of April. Beautiful palm trees lined both sides of the road and cast a pleasant shade on the street.

As I waited at the traffic lights, I took a quick look at myself in the mirror. My natural hair was neatly packed in an elegant bun and my chocolate skin was flawless. It looked like that orange infused tea that I drank regularly was actually working for fresher skin and general detox. At least, something was giving me good results. Without drama.

The traffic light turned green and as I continued driving, I saw several people crossing the overhead bridge and many others were walking on the footpaths. The bus conductors argued with one another and were already struggling for their right of way. Simple road issues that could easily be resolved with patience would probably not be resolved, causing traffic jams for hours more often than not.

At just half past five in the morning, the Lagos hustle and bustle had already started.

I thanked God daily for living close to work because Lagos traffic is a complete nightmare.

I work at Valley View Central Hospital, Ikeja, Lagos. It's a lovely three storey building painted white with a navy roof and tinted windows. It also has state of the art medical equipment and personnel.

I recently qualified as a medical doctor and worked at a medical centre in Abeokuta, my home city, for one year.

Fortunately, I got a better job with a higher salary shortly afterwards at Valley View.

Elated, I relocated from Abeokuta to Lagos, where I currently live alone in a one bedroom flat. Nice, comfortable and lonely.

As I reached the hospital, I parked in my parking spot and took a deep breath before stepping out of my car, squaring my shoulders and walking up the driveway. Greeting people as I passed them by, silently with a polite nod, I stepped through the glass doors into the reception area.

Before I could enter the elevator, the receptionist, a tall, good looking man in his mid twenties, Mr Ighodaro, called me and gave me the 'good news' to start off my day.

"Dr Oyelowo, good morning ma'am. Mr Davies has requested to see you for a consultation by 8 am."

Oh my goodness...Mr Olatunde is back again.

I smiled politely as I responded. "That's alright, I'll be expecting him. Have a nice day."

In the elevator, I kept a straight face while rolling my eyes mentally.

Oh my goodness...Mr Olatunde is back again.

Mr Chidi Olatunde Davies (SAN) is a wealthy, well educated lawyer and jovial man in his early seventies. He is in great shape and is very healthy for a man of his age.....but he is what we doctors refer to as a 'stubborn patient.'

Over the past three months he has come every single week for consultations. Each time he has requested for me specifically. In fairness to him, he has always been a perfect gentleman and even came with his wife (whom he appears to love very much) a few times.

Madam, (his wife) is tired of his antics and so am I. Professional ethics will not permit me to show it though. Especially since he can afford to request for very important person/ executive treatment packages.

He travelled to London for a short vacation with his wife but now....

Oh my goodness...Mr Olatunde is back again!

Several tests have been conducted and Mr Davies has been given assurance of good health, but he keeps coming back. Sometimes it is his back, other time it is his legs, other times it is his eyes. All of which have been tested thoroughly and no ailment has been detected. I advised him to take paracetamol in moderation and get full body massages as frequently as possible...but he kept coming back.

(Olatunde means wealth has come again or wealth has returned in Yoruba. Hence the emphasis on calling him Mr Olatunde, since he keeps coming over and over again, instead of Mr Davies)

I huffed. *In fact!! Insert an irritated pause and eye roll here.*

Each day holds a surprise. But only if we expect it can we see, hear or feel it when it comes to us
- Henri Nouwen

After attending to my first patient for the day, a lady who came for a general ante natal check up and ultrasound, I sat in my office, right beside the room where I attend to patients.

Looking at the wall clock, I noticed it was 8 am. Mr Olatunde, punctual as usual, pressed my door bell. I asked him to come in and he walked in smiling.

“Dr Damilola Amarachi Oyelowo, my daughter, how are you today?”

“Fine, thank you sir. How was your trip? Hope everyone is fine.”

“My dear all is well, thank God. Honey went to Ibadan to spend time with our daughter and grandkids. Our daughter had twins. A boy and a girl.”

“Oh, that’s lovely sir! Extend my regards to her. So, how may I help you sir?”

Let me guess, just a general check up, thank you my dear.

“Just a general check up, thank you my dear.”

I thought as much

“I also want to invite you to my wife’s 65th birthday party. My wife asked me to give you this invitation card.” He gave me a finely decorated yellow envelope and smiled again. “I hope you will be able to attend. Honey said she will give you a call this evening.”

“Sir, I appreciate the invitation, but my attendance depends on whether or not I am on duty that day.”

“My dear, relax. I am sure Segun will excuse you for at least two hours.”

Dr Olusegun Mark Jibowu (OMJ) is the MD/CEO of Valley View Hospital, just in case you were wondering.

“I’ll see what I can do sir.”

Shortly after Mr Davies arrival, his blood and urine samples were taken and sent to the lab. I checked his temperature, blood pressure and weight (which turned out to be fine as usual) while he waited for his results.

When his result sheet was forwarded to me I carefully went through each detail and discovered that he had malaria.

“Sir, you have malaria. I will prescribe..”

Before I could complete my statement, he slowly leaned back on his chair.

“My dear, I feel tired.”

“Daddy, by God’s grace you will be okay. I will start your treatment immediately. I would like to monitor you at least for today. You will need bed rest.”

“Please call my son. I want to see him.”

I must admit, when he made that statement, I was concerned. He was a stubborn patient but I had to admit that he was a good man and I had nothing but best wishes for him. He was like a father to me and I felt a little guilty for finding him annoying all along.

He gave me his son’s contact details and I promised him that I would get in touch with him immediately.

I arranged for him to be taken to the male ward after giving him initial treatment and used my office phone to call his son as he asked me to.

“Good morning, Mr Davies. This is Dr Oyelowo calling from Valley View Hospital, Ikeja. Kindly come to the hospital as soon as possible. Your father has been admitted after a malaria diagnosis. The attention of a next of kin is advisable since he is elderly.”

Silence

and

more

silence

"Hello? Can you hear me sir?"

He cleared his throat and grunted to show his annoyance at being disturbed.

Are you serious right now? Your elderly father is in hospital and you are annoyed that I contacted you? If you were not contacted promptly, you would be quick to sue the management and me and before you know it, I would be food for bloggers! I thought.

When he finally spoke, his response added more 'humour' to what was already turning out to be a 'colourful' day.

***“ Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love”
-Ephesians 4:2***

“It’s *Dr Davies*”

Okaaaay ... “Pardon me sir”

“Do you know how busy I am? I am running multimillion dollar ICT and fintech companies!”

So what? You are not the first or last.... “Pardon me sir, I have an appointment. If you need further information, kindly come to the hospital. Thank you and have a nice day.”

I ended the call and huffed. *What an arrogant nuisance!* It was very important for medical staff to not allow people with such an attitude to discourage them from getting in touch with a patient’s next of kin if it was necessary.

Some people would be so grateful for getting prompt information about their loved ones...others wouldn’t. No matter what, my parents brought me up with the principle, do your best and leave the rest.

He wasn’t the first person to react that way so I shrugged it off and continued attending to other patients. It was a busy day but everything was under control.

Dr Emeka Ejiofor popped in at around one o’clock in the afternoon. He asked how everything was going and gave me some words of advice. We went for lunch shortly afterwards at the hospital cafeteria.

We sat in a comfortable silence as we ate rice and beef stew. I was really lucky to have a senior colleague who had my back. He was a unique looking man, he appeared to have albino genes but he did not possess the dominant albino genes. He was an average height man with blonde hair and freckled skin.

He seemed like a really nice person and considering that he was hardworking, well organized and brilliant, he would probably be a great medical director someday.

I noticed that he looked at me with warmth in his eyes, but he said nothing and neither did I.

Halfway through our meal, I got a call from the reception and a few seconds afterwards, Dr Ejiofor got a call for an emergency C-section operation.

We rushed our fruit juice and hurried back to our respective duty posts, walking side by side into the ground floor/ reception area. Dr Ejiofor and I parted ways as he went to the maternity ward and I was stopped on the way to my office.

A tall, handsome man with a slim but muscular body checked his gold wristwatch and walked towards me. He was in a navy suit and sky blue corporate shirt that fit him and his golden complexion perfectly. He walked with confidence... *or arrogance* and mentally I put two and two together.

This is probably Demola ‘Doctor’ Davies.

I allowed myself to have a brief moment to appreciate how strikingly good looking he was and kept a straight

face.

“Good afternoon, how may I help you sir?”

Mr Ighodaro called out to me at that moment. “Dr Oyelowo, that is Dr Demola Davies. I called you because he wanted to see you.”

I pretended to take a few seconds to remember him. He quite obviously was not pleased about that.

“Oh!? Yes! I’m happy you were able to make it. Come to my office.”

He walked ahead of me and entered my office. *How rude!*

After we both had our seats, he maintained eye contact and studied me. I raised an eyebrow and smiled gently.

"How are you today, Dr Davies?"

"Fine"

“Have you gone to see your father?”

“Yes”

“Do you have any enquiries or complaints?”

“No”

“In the absence of any other developments, daddy will be discharged by tomorrow morning. We would just like to observe him overnight because of his age and slight dehydration.”

“OK”

What is wrong with this man!? Did he request to see me for two letter word play? Is this a flipping nursery school!? I thought.

I stood up calmly. “Thank you for coming Dr Demola Davies. Have a nice day.”

Demola also stood up. He fixed his light brown gaze on me and leaned over my table, placing his hands firmly on the surface. “I am not done here.”

I remained standing while I observed him with my dark brown eyes. He couldn’t intimidate me anywhere. **ESPECIALLY NOT IN MY OFFICE!**

I replied curtly. “OK”

“I was extremely busy when you called me earlier. In fact, I had just arrived in Lagos from Abuja and had just ended a presentation to some multinational investors.”

I suppressed a smile. He was too proud to come out plainly and apologize for his attitude when I called him.
“OK”

“Will you be on duty when my father is discharged tomorrow?”

“No”

“Your pharmacy has all the medication he will need after he’s discharged in stock, right?”

“Yes”

He chuckled. “Dr Damilola Amarachi Oyelowo!”

“Sir?”

A knock on the door interrupted my one word responses to Demola. It turned out to be Nurse Adeyemi who informed me that my attention was needed in the children’s ward.

Demola shook my hand and I noticed that he held it for a little longer than necessary. His hand was gentle but strong. He looked at me slowly, from head to toe.

“I’ll be on my way now. How may I keep in touch?”

Nice try Demola . You’re smart but I am too.

I handed him the hospital brochure. “Kindly contact the hospital via any of the phone numbers listed on the cover.”

He appeared to be shocked, but only for a second. Demola probably wasn’t used to not getting his way, *no questions asked*, especially with women. He smiled as he walked out before turning back to say, “See you later Amara.”

My eyebrows rose slightly when he called me ‘Amara’. I could’ve sworn that his voice sounded deeper. Only my mum and best friend, Susan, called me that.

I smiled in response. Speechless. For the first time in a long time.

Before the end of my shift, Dr Kareem Ajanaku arrived. He went through my official report and we had a brief chat about the day as I handed over. I was beyond relieved to be done for the day and couldn’t wait to go home and curl up on my bed.

Say what you want to say. Partying is overrated. There’s nothing like staying at home resting in bed with a book or watching movies.

I packed my phone and charger into my bag and was about to lock my office and leave when I suddenly realised that my ‘small’ phone was missing.

In case you were wondering, I was using an Android phone as my 'main' phone, but I kept a cheaper, old model 'small' phone too for backup. It wouldn't be difficult to replace but I had some stuff on it.

After checking my table, drawer, hanger and even my hand basin. I decided to call my number. Hopefully whoever found it would answer.

It rang several times before someone finally answered my call.

“Hello, Good evening. I am the owner of the phone you are holding. I will pay for your transport fare if you could return it to Valley View Hospital, Ikeja” I said.

“Have dinner with me” The smooth, baritone voice replied.

What!?! Is this man insane? Who has dinner with strangers? He could be an abductor or murderer!

“Sorry, I can't do that” I replied. Then after a brief pause, I added, “Please let us meet at a public place.”

“Amara, you will do what I ask you to.”

Then it clicked.

Demola!?”

He chuckled. “Yes honey.”

I fumed. “How on Earth did you get my phone!?”

He chuckled again. “Honey, I wouldn't have nightmares about 'getting' this kind of phone. I use an iPhone. I saw it in the pocket of my blazer when I got to my office.”

Darn that coat hanger in my office! I must have put the phone in the wrong pocket!

“You know what, keep it till you come to the hospital to take Daddy home.”

This time he laughed out loud. “I must see you tonight.”

I huffed. “I don't know where you are and I am just closing after a long day!”

“Now you are talking honey..I am at the Flamingo House, Moon Crescent.”

The Flamingo House? A posh hotel/restaurant with a black bow tie and dinner gown dress code?

“Don't be rid...I can't drive that far!”

“Relax. I'll send my PA.”

“I don't have a dinner gown or accessories to go with it!”

“Honey, I've got it covered. I have arranged the perfect gown and accessories for your tall, dark and curvy body.”

I swooned for a moment before I came to my senses. I had run out of excuses. He must have sensed my reluctance as I remained silent. Being the ruthless CEO that he was, he gave me the final blow...

“Now is your chance to spend the evening with a handsome, billionaire CEO. I’ve seen your preferences in your reading app.”

I cringed and almost died of embarrassment.

His voice deepened even further. “The driver is on his way, honey.”

" But every memory of friendship shared, even for a short time, is a treasure, like sunshine and warmth in our lives, like a cool breeze on a humid day, like a shower of rain refreshing the earth"

-Unknown

True to his words, a man in a smart gray and white shirt and black trousers, arrived about ten minutes later in a shiny black Land Rover. He introduced himself as Tonye and explained that he had been directed to see me by Demola Davies. He presented me with a big, shiny black box with a golden bow.

I excused myself and went to my office to open it and saw the most beautiful formal gown I had ever seen. It was a sparkling, purple halter neck gown with small cut outs at the sides. *Purple was my favourite colour, did he know that or was it a coincidence?* It shimmered under the lights.

Suppressing my excitement, (yeah, I love presents and rarely went on outings) I removed some more packaging and saw a cute pair of gold earrings and a lovely pair of gold stiletto heels with a matching diamond clutch.

There was a small make up kit at the bottom of the box and just when I thought he had done it all, I saw another silky paper package. I opened it and revealed a matching black, lacy strapless bra and panties.

I gasped but decided to just roll with it. After all, it wasn't as if he was going to see it.

Since I hardly ever went out, it took me everything I had not to squeal with excitement. I freshened up quickly in the bathroom adjacent to my office and I was ready in about ten minutes.

Doctors don't waste time getting ready.

All the items were a perfect fit.

The cool evening air blew gently and the full moon cast a silver glow over the night. As I stepped out of my office and walked towards the car, I smiled politely at Tonye who waited patiently for me. He assisted me into the vehicle and we headed to Flamingo House.

"That will be all Tonye. Thank you and have a good evening." Demola said.

We had arrived and I had just been cleared at the reception when Demola called to ask Tonye to leave.

"Alright sir" He replied.

I smiled. "Mr Tonye, thank you. Have a good night."

He smiled back and handed me the key. "You are welcome ma'am. Good night" He said, and left.

A waiter led me to the table that Demola had reserved in the rooftop outdoor executive lounge.

Demola was looking even more dashing than he did in the afternoon in a flawless black suit and bow tie. He must have gotten that suit tailored specifically for him. It wasn't tight but it fit his athletic, muscular frame

beautifully.

My eyes were tracing him from his gorgeous face, to his shoulders, chest, legs and down to his shiny black shoes.

I thought I was checking him out 'codedly' but it appears that I was caught.

Demola's eyes twinkled with amusement. "Good evening honey. I'm glad you could make it." He teased with his most obnoxious smirk yet.

He pulled a chair for me and rested his warm hands on my shoulders gently. "You are absolutely stunning, Amara."

After he lifted his hands, I could still feel the warmth and hated how much I loved his cologne. *What was that? Pine? Honey? Musk?* I could spend all day smelling him and not get tired. *Damn!*

Demola returned to his seat and looked into my eyes. "What would you like to drink?"

"Chilled water or fruit juice will be fine thanks" I replied.

Seeing that he raised an eyebrow, I added. "I don't drink alcohol. At all."

"Do you mind if I have some wine?"

"No. I am okay with that."

"Alright since you don't mind. I won't have any."

Huh? I guess he just asked to see if I would try to make him feel as if he shouldn't drink, just because I don't.

"Alright honey", he said. "Let's enjoy our date."

"It's not a date." I replied hastily.

He smiled fully this time revealing lovely white teeth and chuckled. I noticed that he had a mild gap between the two front ones.

"Honey, I asked you to come here and you came. Willingly. We are sitting together, having a candle lit dinner, alone. I heard your short breaths when I put my hands on your shoulders and we haven't been able to take eyes off each other all evening. If this isn't a date, what is it?"

I didn't respond, partly because he was right, partly because I was tired.

He passed me the menu and asked me to order, brushing his fingers against mine. I ordered lamb stir fry and seafood salad and he ordered lasagna and chicken salad.

I narrowed my eyes at him wondering if he had any other tricks or treats, while he called the waiter to give him our orders.

He noticed my look and ignored it, winking at me discretely. Continuing with his charming attitude. Smiling at me every now and then.

The evening actually turned out to be wonderful. A pianist played classical music throughout the evening. He told me a lot about himself and a little bit about his family too.

I already knew his parents, Chidi, a lawyer and his mum Tiwa, a novelist who also ran a successful publishing firm. He told me a little about his elder sister, Ireti, a fashion designer, who recently gave birth to twins and how much he loves being an uncle to them.

Demola also talked about how he got his BSc in Computer Science and Engineering at the University of Lagos and went to Massachusetts Institute of Technology for his postgraduate studies. His eyes lit up when he told me about the business ideas he came up with while pursuing his doctorate, the challenges he faced before he could secure investors and his projects started to become lucrative.

He also got me to talk a lot about myself too. Which is something that I rarely do. I told him about my mum, Ngozi, a teacher, who was now a proprietress of her own nursery and primary school, dad, Bankole an architect and my brother, Niyi, a petroleum engineer. I also told him about medical school at Ahmadu Bello University and life afterwards.

I found myself feeling very comfortable with him despite all the walls that I had put in place against him.

After dinner, he asked me for a dance and I was shocked to find myself saying yes, before I could complain. Ordinarily, I would have felt tired but when he was looking into my eyes and holding my hand, I felt so strong.

He held me close as we danced gently, whispering about how much he was enjoying my company and how gorgeous I looked. His hands slipped around my waist as he drew me even closer than before.

Demola looked into my eyes and then at my lips and said, "Your lips are so inviting."

That was just what I was thinking about his! Didn't want to tell him though. "Thank you?"

He smiled and we danced a little more. Totally caught up in the moment and losing track of time.

At the end of the evening, he held my hand as he led me out of the restaurant and assisted me as we went down the stairs, placing a protective hand on my lower back.

Another driver was waiting for us and Demola tossed him the keys to the car.

I didn't realize how sleepy I was because by the time we got to my place, Demola had to carry me bridal style to my flat. When we reached the main door, he unlocked it and laid me on my bed.

"Honey, can I take of your clothes?" He whispered into my ear.

"Umm, yeah..Thank you" , I replied, half asleep.

"Thank you? Amara, you are mine for life and the mother of my children."

"Of course...I mean. What?" My eyes flew open.

He looked deep into my eyes with eyes twinkling with mischief. My breath hitched when he moved closer.

His lips were just an inch away from mine and my eyes fluttered shut. It was our first date, I mean, dinner but at that moment it felt so right. My heart raced with excitement.

Demola whispered into my ear huskily. "Amara, you forgot to ask for your phone."

***I am thinking of you
In my sleepless solitude tonight
If it's wrong to love you
Then my heart just won't let me be right
-Mariah Carey (My All)***

Demola hovered over me as he slipped my gown over my head. I felt like a gentle bell was ringing in my body and he was controlling it. He drew my hands away and pinned them beside my head when I tried to cover my lacy black bra and panties.

“Your body is amazing and you should never feel shy around me” He said huskily.

I tensed up and he kissed my lips gently. “Relax honey, I promise to be gentle. Tell me at any time if you want to stop. Okay. Breathe in and out. Slowly.”

Alright. Breathe.

In

and

out,

in

and

out

He told me to unbutton his shirt. Encouraging me to touch him as he was touching me. His body hard, my body soft.

His golden skin and toned body, exposed and making me feel things I had never felt before.

Slipping of his trousers, I tried to take my eyes of his silky boxers.

When I withdrew my hands from his rock hard body, he pulled them back, gently guiding me where he wanted them to be.

“I want to see if you can keep quiet. You wouldn’t want to disturb your neighbours, would you?”, He whispered into my ear, brushing his sharp jaw against my cheek.

I nodded.

Demola kissed me, this time more passionately, and trailed the kisses from my lips to my chest.

Going down lower and lower while maintaining eye contact. He paused at my waist. Perhaps, he was

waiting for me to tell him to go ahead.

I nodded, eyes closed as I braced myself for what I had been waiting for... ..

I woke up, panting as my heart raced faster than a jaguar. It was already the morning, eight am to be precise.

Checking my calendar, I sighed. The red wave, that time of the month. No wonder I had such a crazy dream. Fortunately, I would have three days off, enough time to bring my hormones under control before seeing him again.

I lay in bed thinking about the evening I had spent with Demola and tried not to think about what was next. Taking each day, one at a time was a much better idea.

He could be an arrogant jerk but he could also be very charming. I shook my head and smiled to myself, thinking about how he acted as if he wanted to kiss me but didn't. I felt like kicking myself because I had obviously wanted it.

Demola was probably sitting in his Victoria Island headquarter office right now, with his usual satisfied smirk on his face.

Then again, he might be playing golf or monitoring the stock market or doing whatever billionaires do in the mornings.

Deciding not to think too deeply about it, I read my bible, prayed and had a long, cold, shower. A cold shower is exactly what I needed after waking up with Demola on my mind.

I was getting dressed in a pink T-shirt and black shorts, when I heard a knock at the door. Rolling my eyes, I intended to ignore it when I got a phone call.

“Good morning, ma'am, I am at your doorstep and I have a package to deliver to you”

“I didn't order any package. *Ogbeni* (Mister) don't call my..”

“Demola Davies sent me to you”

I opened the door and a man in a green uniform greeted me. He asked me to sign for the package and left.

It was a breakfast tray. Complete with toast, bacon, sausages, and some pieces of fruit. He must have remembered how I said I liked sausages but only had them as a rare treat because of keeping my curves under control.

I opened the red card attached to it and smiled as I read it.

Dear Amara,

Thank for the amazing night you spent with me. Hope you enjoy the breakfast.

P.S. Your 'small' phone is on your dressing table.

I shook my head and smiled. It was a simple but kind gesture. I really didn't feel like doing anything that morning so the breakfast tray was the perfect gift at that moment.

I also noted how he thanked me for 'spending the night' with him. What a tease! I didn't 'spend the night' with him. We had dinner!

The afternoon was quite sunny and birds sang sweetly in the trees outside my flat. I opened the windows and a warm breeze blew in. I decided to do general cleaning of my flat and the laundry.

When I was spreading clothes on the washing line, my mind drifted to Susan.

It startled me that Demola was the first man that I had allowed to attempt getting to know me better. After what happened with her, I was so troubled and was in an unhappy state for years. Shutting all potential suitors out.

For years, I convinced myself that I hadn't found the one but truth be told, I had not been willing to give anyone a chance.

My eyes shone with unshed tears as I remembered everything that happened as if it were yesterday. She was my best friend. She didn't deserve what happened to her. Neither did I.

My family relocated to Abeokuta, my father's home city and I was sent to Enugu to spend time with my mother's family during holidays.

Niyi, my brother was kind and did his best to be supportive but I sometimes caught him looking at me with a sad look in his eyes. I guess he felt sorry for me but he felt unable to offer any real help.

Being told to 'forget about it' or 'move on' is not how grief should be handled. The bad, sweep the dirt under the carpet method.

Perhaps if I had been able to deal with my feelings or talk about my pain I would have overcome it better.

Susan and I were only sixteen.

We had recently completed our O level examinations. All roads led to bright futures for us.

She wanted to be a lawyer and I wanted to be a medical doctor. It was what we wanted all our lives.

Susan was a cheerful and brilliant girl. She was also quite good at sport too. Where I was brilliant, reserved and more into STEM club.

I finished spreading the clothes on the line and went inside. The tears that I had been trying to control started to flow freely. I cried silently for some minutes, perhaps an hour.

At the age twenty seven, I knew it had been over ten years but the emotional pain was still so deep. My mum, dad, brother and Hope Church members kept asking me when I was going to get married and they had even started a special prayer for marital breakthrough on my behalf.

I once walked in on them, mid prayer and they swiftly changed the subject and left the room. One after the other.

Some nasty busybodies pointed out that my biological clock was ticking and I should 'swallow my pride' and settle down.

They told me that my age mates, Sola, Tamuno, Aishat, Funmi and Chizoba (we grew up in the same neighbourhood) were all married with at least a kid.

The people coming to unfair conclusions had no idea about me or my past. No one cared to ask me if I had any issues I was dealing with. They just assumed that I was proud and my standards were too high.

Later that day, as the sun set and the stars came out, I realized that I had spent most of the day 'detached' from my surroundings.

I had missed ten calls and several notifications. I didn't even hear when my phone was ringing. I also realized that I hadn't eaten since breakfast. Strangely, I didn't even feel hungry.

I checked the missed calls and saw that my mum, dad, brother, church youth leader and some other person called 'Obim' called me.

I called them all back, except 'Obim' and gave excuses, *the way I usually do when I get into unhappy moods*, for not being available.

Who is 'Obim'? I wondered. I was sure that I had not saved any contact as 'Obim' I used my caller identification app to search for the identity of 'Obim'.

To say I was surprised would definitely be lying. 'Obim', meaning 'my heart' in Igbo language was Demola. He must have saved his number on my phone when I was sleeping.

He sent a message after I missed his calls, to thank me again for caring for his father and that he had taken him home in the morning.

I had just met Demola and there was so much more to know about him, yet I felt as if I had known him all of my life. I knew that I should give him a chance, even if I would exercise caution. I mean, obviously, he was a handsome, single and wealthy. Getting carried away and not using my brain would be a foolish thing to do.

As I responded to his message my heart warmed at the thought of him and raced with anxiety at the same time. To take the risk, or not take the risk? That was the question.

" Find the love you seek, by first finding the love within yourself. Learn to rest in that place within you that is your true home."— Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Day by day, the relationship between Demola and I grew. I was optimistic but still very much at alert. I was trying to take time everyday to think positive thoughts and love myself more.

I continued to work at Valley View and Demola continued to run Regal Tech Corporation and his other affiliated businesses.

One day, my mum paid me a visit in Lagos and accompanied me to work. She told me she felt bored at my flat, so she would prefer to stay in my office. I decided to indulge her since I didn't attend to patients in my office anyway.

I am not sure if it was a coincidence or if Demola had some people at the hospital or area on his payroll....but he popped in shortly after we arrived.

We had been seeing each other for about four and a half months. But only every now and then since we were both very busy.

We kept in touch online frequently and had lunch together a few times, his hand gripping mine possessively during our outings. On nights we were both free, we had gone to see some movies.

He had come to my flat twice but I had been giving excuses in order not to do likewise and pay him a visit at home, though I had been to his main office.

I was anxious about being alone with him in his Banana Island house. Offshore, surrounded by all that water. I wanted to get to know him better before taking that step.

Anyway, that day happened to be a Friday, so what else would Demola do beside come wearing his perfectly tailored native wear? A wine coloured linen buba (top), sokoto (trouser) and white fila (cap).

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He walked into my office with his usual air of class and authority and greeted me with a gentle hug.

My mum raised an interested eyebrow.

He then turned to her and bowed respectfully. "Good afternoon ma'am. My name is Demola."

My mum greeted him very cheerfully and gave me the is-this-the-man-you-have-been-dating-and-you-didnt-bother-to-tell-us-the-good-news-look.

African parents!

My mum, definitely would not hesitate to express her feelings.

Demola had removed his cap and held it. Standing respectfully as he waited for me to introduce him to my mother. It was obvious that he was absolutely enjoying the situation.

I decided to take control of the situation, in order to prevent my mum from doing so.

"Mum, this is my friend Demola. Demola this is my mother."

Demola prostrated again. "Mum, I am so happy to meet you. Amara gets her beauty from you. Welcome to Lagos, how is Daddy?"

"My son, stand up. God bless you. It's nice to meet you too. So how long have you been Amarachi's..mmm..friend?"

"Mum!", I said. Cringing with embarrassment. She gave me the what-is-your-problem-I-just-asked-a-question-look.

I kept quiet.

Demola chuckled and smiled at her. "I met Amara here, at Valley View Hospital in April. We have been friends ever since. I am very fond of her and we get along so well."

"Really? So what plans do you have for my daughter. Are you planning to be jus.."

"Mum!" My mother was really something!

Demola pretended to look a little shy and bowed slightly again. "Mum, I have confessed my feelings to Amara but she.... *he trailed off*...I have seen in her the qualities I lo..cherish but she doesn't seem as eager as I am."

Demola didn't hold back. He more or less threw me into the lion's den. Mum gasped and gave me an unimpressed look.

Just at that moment, Nurse Halima informed me that my attention was needed in the maternity ward.

Praise the Lord! My mum and Demola would have all the time in the world to chat and get to know each other. In my absence.

"You know, you deserve an AMVCA for your performance during my mum's visit!"

Demola chuckled. "Your mum is such a pleasant woman. She wanted to know all about me and she was so friendly but strict at the same time. After you went to the maternity ward, she told me a lot about you and when you were growing up."

I was resting my head on his shoulder as we sat side by side on his lounge at his office. We were facing the beautiful view of Elegushi beach as we talked.

The MD wanted to set up an annex at VI, so I couldn't miss the chance to check on Demola.

We had attended his mother's birthday two weeks after my mother returned to Abeokuta. I was happy to see his family, especially his dad *who no longer came for 'check ups'*, and other well wishers.

I went home with so many souvenirs and his mother gave me plenty of cake, food and drinks to take away. The party was amazing.

In fact, Yoruba people love to party.

"Oh my goodness.." I groaned.

Demola was really enjoying the memory of their chat. "Mum told me about how you fell off a swing set at a garden party and cried so much that that the party clown started dancing for you to get you to calm down."

I shoved him playfully. "I was only five! I can't believe she told you that!"

We were laughing and joking when I got 'the' e-mail. The notification popped up on my phone screen.

From: Concerned Person

To: Me

Subject: Urgent Information

Dear Miss Damilola Oyelowo,

This is an urgent message for you to end your relationship with Demola Davies with immediate effect. You are a bright young lady and you certainly do not want to be with a murderer.

Evidence is available on request but before then, ask him, who is AB Konpo?

Regards,

Concerned Person

I stood up sharply as I stepped away from Demola. My phone fell out of my hand and tears flowed freely from my eyes.

He rushed towards me. “Honey? What’s wrong?”

“Don’t touch me!” I said. Backing further away from him.

“What the..? Amara talk to me.” He pleaded.

“I need to go!” I tried to leave but he rushed to the door and blocked the way.

“Damilola mi owon (Damilola my precious one) You can’t just..”

I looked into his eyes, unable to control the sobbing. “Who is AB Konpo?”

Demola froze.

“So it’s true?”

His eyes shone with tears but they didn’t fall. “Honey, please let me explain. It was self..”

This time I raised my voice. “It was what? When did you plan on telling me that you *killed* someone? Who knows, maybe there are others! Is that the foundation of your wealth?”

That hurt him badly, because for the first time ever since I met him, he shouted at me. “How dare you! I work my arse off for everything I have and God crowned my efforts! I AM NOT A MURDERER! I have been caring, supportive and tolerant of you since we met and you can stand there and conclude that I am a murderer, just because of an e-mail? Do you even know the source!”

“I don’t have to know the source! Something as terrible as that happened and I’m hearing it from elsewhere! How do you expect me to trust you?”

“What the heck Amara! I wanted to tell you everything but some things are really hard to say! By the way, you should take the beam out of your eye before you try to take the speck out of mine! You haven’t been totally honest with me either! We are adults in a relationship and you are so damn emotionally cold!”

“I told you I was a virgin and I wanted to keep myself for marriage!” I retorted.

“Yeah I get that and respect you for it, but that doesn’t explain how you panic when we are alone and how you have anxiety attacks when I try to be romantic! You won’t even come to my house! Obviously there are stuff you are not telling me too!

When did you intend to tell me why you are cold as ice! I have been forcing myself to try and understand. I trusted you to explain everything when you are ready because I lo..”

Demola shook his head and stepped aside. “I shouldn’t have blocked your way.”

I looked at him one more time, my heart breaking into a million pieces. So disappointed in how we were so close to each other physically yet so far away emotionally.

I should have explained why I had problems connecting with him emotionally and battled with anxiety.

I never tried to put myself in his shoes and imagine what it must have felt like to feel the lack of warmth.

Demola Adekunle Davies. *Obim*. I loved him but never told him. I did not love myself enough or open up fully and neither did he.

Now, I had to let go.

DEMOLA

Damilola mi owon walked out on me.

Amara my sweetheart didn't look back.

After all the wonderful times we spent together and the relationship we had, she didn't even want to let me explain.

Heartbreak is the most indescribable pain. I was falling to pieces but putting a brave face on each day.

Day one to day seven I was so angry that she didn't even bother to let me explain. By day eight I woke up with a massive headache and a heart so broken I had to force myself to get out of bed.

My responsibilities in running Regal Tech Corporation and my other various business ventures could not permit me to allow the pain to surface. So, I suppressed the pain with work.

Before I met my sweetheart, I didn't have specific off days. I worked day and night on various computer software, developing applications, telecommunications and real estate projects.

Meeting her had been a turning point. My father admitted that he thought that she was perfect for me, so he frequently went to the hospital to try and get to know her better. Hoping one day, he could be the bridge to make us meet.

He knew I was always busy and wouldn't be able to come over without a good reason, so he asked Amara to call me..and the rest they say is history.

I did all I could to keep my private life out of the spotlight, so there wasn't much drama with the media, but some lying bloggers tried to spread fake news about us. *We passed that test.*

When a jealous admin staff, Ellen, tried to frame me for cheating. Amara put her in her place, *sharply* and ordered for her dismissal. *That was so hot.* We passed that test.

My parents, sister and brother in law, absolutely adored her and her parents, brother and sister in law, absolutely adored me. *We passed that test.*

I only had two close friends, Harry Badmus and Jola Osagie, the former based in US, the latter based in UK. We hardly ever had any time for each other but we met at MIT. When they came to Lagos and met my sweetheart, they BOTH said she should call them if I messed up. *She passed that test.*

When that spongebob, Dr Emeka, kept trying to flirt with *my woman* at work. I called him to order and told him to stay away from her if he knew what was good for him. She said he was harmless and I overreacted.. *But she thought it was hot.* *We passed that test.*

She was effortlessly beautiful and hardly ever wore make-up, often wearing very conservative clothes. She understood that being with me she would have to 'step up' her look. Amara was beautiful before, after she was breathtaking. *She passed that test.*

My parents did not find out about our break up until the tenth day. They blamed me immediately.

Dad said that when our relationship hit the six month mark, I should have told her about what happened.

He said that when him and mum were dating, they had a fight that could have ended their relationship, because of somethings that they didn't open up about.

Dad told me that I should sort this matter out myself and win her back.

I tried to reach out to her but she didn't respond.

Amara had trust and anxiety issues. I could see in her eyes and her actions that she cared so much for me....but she was holding back.

It couldn't have been a former boyfriend, she said she was a virgin and had not dated before me.

She had a good relationship with both sides of her family, so I did not think it could have been a relative. I kept believing in her because for me it was love at first sight.

I love her.

I did not tell her what happened because I was afraid that I would lose her.

The thing which I feared most has happened to me.

Seven years ago

"Demola , I have gone through your proposal and I am impressed. I will send the details and venue of our meeting via e-mail."

"Thank you so much sir, I appreciate this opportunity."

"Its not a problem. You are welcome. Call me Mr Konpo or AB."

"Um, okay sir. Goodbye."

"Bye"

I was the best graduating student in computer science and engineering and had recently developed a mobile app for a private firm.

Mr Konpo was a Brungarian financier that I got in touch with after several calls and e-mails to source for funds for the vision I had.

I went to his private residence in Brungaria in a suit and tie, along with my mini laptop and PowerPoint slides. Fully prepared to convince him to invest in the app so I could diversify and advance the project.

A housekeeper welcomed me and instructed me to go to the board room, upstairs, down the corridor, last room on the left.

I rushed up the stairs, excited that I was about to seal a record breaking deal, and accidentally went down the corridor and entered the room ON THE RIGHT.

Imagine my horror, when I saw many young men, most of them looked my age. Some of them a little younger. All of them were sitting on the bare floor. Silent and scantily clad, with their hands tied and mouths covered.

Before I could turn and flee, a man in a red mask attacked me. I had a rush of adrenaline as I fought him with all my strength.

He tried to choke me and I broke free and punched him hard. As he stumbled, I fell backwards but knew I had to act fast or it might cost me my life.

The man got back up and tried to drag my legs. I kicked him hard in the head and he rolled towards the stairs.

He got up and pulled out a dagger and walked towards me. Step by step.

I was curled up on the floor not so far away. My whole life flashed before my eyes.

Just as he was about to strike me, I rose up with a savage surge of energy and speared him towards the stairs.

He fell backwards, tumbled down the stairs and broke his neck. Falling on his own dagger in the process.

I panicked but fortunately, I had learnt a lot from my father, an excellent lawyer.

Evidence is very important.

I snapped photos of the men in the room and had uploaded an audio recording of my fight with the strange man, thinking I would not survive.

Before I fled the scene, I removed the mask of the man, in order to snap his photo.

It was AB Konpo

Notable philanthropist and co-ordinator of non governmental organizations that had raised millions for the underprivileged and educational institutions.

When the police stormed his residence later. The room upstairs was empty and everywhere had been cleaned. Thoroughly.

His family and associates would have destroyed me in court but I had unshakable evidence.

My family stood by my side as I was heavily compensated and the matter was settled out of court.

People mourned for him and celebrated 'a life well spent' after his death was announced as a 'domestic accident'.

My family spent days and nights praying and fighting for my name to be fully cleared and sent me to MIT shortly afterwards.

I am not a murderer. It was self-defense.

I looked out of the window of my Abuja residence as I leaned back on a chair, swishing my drink in my glass cup. The details of what happened were far too delicate to reveal without thinking twice.

Leaving Lagos was the best option for me after seeing Damilola everywhere and in everything.

Whenever I went out, I'd see her type of car, her type of hairstyle or clothes.

A new film release would remind me of the times we went to the cinema together.

Seeing a hospital or hearing her kind of music was worse. Which was a nightmare because Honey listened to naija and foreign music. Fast beats and slow ones. There was no escaping it.

I punished myself looking at the photos we snapped together all day and night. I missed her smile, her voice, her touch, her kind but firm attitude.

I was not happy about how everything played out, but with tears in my eyes, I sighed.

Perhaps it was for the best.

" And I'll rise up

I'll rise like the day

I'll rise up

I'll rise unafraid

I'll rise up

And I'll do it a thousand times again"

- Andrea Day (Rise up)

DAMILOLA

I cried day and night for two weeks after I left Demola's office.

Later, I would only cry first thing in the morning and last thing at night.

I rejected his calls and blocked him on all the platforms on which we communicated.

His parents and sister tried reaching out to me and I 'politely' declined all attempts to make contact.

My mum and dad suspected that something was wrong when Niyi, my elder brother returned to Lagos from Grace Petroleum Company, Port Harcourt and said he wanted to meet Demola.

I gave excuses, not wanting to explain what happened.

My dad told me that I was stubborn, just like my mother and I must have done something wrong.

After much pressure from Niyi, I told him privately that I got a shocking e-mail warning him about Demola and he couldn't deny the accusation.

Niyi being a level headed man asked if I allowed him to explain.

When I said no, he shook his head disapprovingly, "No matter what, Damilola, you should always allow for an explanation. Things aren't always what they seem."

"But the person said that evidence was available if I was ready to request for it," I replied.

"So? People get framed, lied against all the time," he retorted. "Did you do any investigation of your own?"

"No. I panicked, alright. He was the first man I opened up too and I was scared. I didn't want to take any risks after.."

Niyi put his hand on mine as we sat side by side on the verandah after work. "What happened was terrible, but you can't allow that to destroy your happiness today."

I kept quiet.

"Damilola, do you love him?"

I sobbed silently as I nodded. I missed him so badly. His voice, smile, sense of humour, business acumen, maturity, intelligence and even his cockiness, which I had grown to love.

It had been three months since I had seen him.

Niyi put an arm around my shoulder and patted my back. "I am so sorry that mum, dad and I did not do enough to help you process, grieve and heal after that incident."

"Its okay. I understand. You thought that you were doing what was best for me when you tried to make me act as if it never happened..It's just so sad that I work as a medical doctor helping others and not getting the help I needed too."

"You know what you need to do. You need to rise up. Rise up Damilola. Rise up and fight for yourself. Rise up and forge ahead, without allowing the past hurt to hold you down."

My heart swelled and I felt like a load had finally been lifted off my shoulders.

Just as we were talking and Niyi was wiping my tears with a handkerchief. The three pm news broadcast started. Different news stories were reported before a story about a state estate development project came on.

Demola was looking slimmer, standing beside the Governor, and some other delegates.

"Look Damilola! He's in Lagos!" Niyi said.

I had previously been told that he had relocated to Abuja by his PA, Tonye, when I saw him at a store in Ikeja. Seeing that he was now in Lagos was good news.

"Damilola. This is a chance to get your closure. Here him out and settle your misunderstanding or move on."

"But he will probably fly straight back to Abuja," I replied.

"It doesn't hurt to try," he retorted.

I got up and dressed up in a hurry. "You're right. I am going to give it this one last shot."

I could not drive because I felt so nervous.

After what seemed like hours in the taxi I chartered. I was finally standing in front of Demola's house.

I stood there for about five minutes thinking about what I was going to say, before I decided to take a courageous step and ring his bell. Fortunately, Tonye was at home and he let me in.

I walked in and greeted Tonye as he ushered me into the house. I stood in the waiting area and was so happy to see Demola when he walked in shortly afterwards.

Demola froze and so did I.

We were both staring at each other without saying a word.

Tonye looked at his boss and looked at me. Being the quick witted man that he was, he quickly sensed tension.

"Soooo, I'll leave you to have your meeting. I'll be in the guest house if you need me sir," Tonye said.

Demola nodded without looking in his direction.

I took a few cautious steps towards him, "Demola, I am so sorry. I was wrong to not allow you explain yourself. You were right, I had trust and issues that I didn't open up to you about and it held me back from giving you what you deserved."

I stepped closer and he shook his head as he responded. "Do you know what I passed through after you left? You destroyed me. What kind of relationship falls apart because of an e-mail from an unknown source? You didn't even let me explain."

He turned his back and looked at the floor before looking at the ceiling. Perhaps he was trying to control his tears.

"Hon..Amarachi, I think you should leave."

I sobbed uncontrollably and grabbed him from behind, "I was wrong to walk out on you without fighting for us first. I will not let that happen again."

When I grabbed him, his tense body relaxed slightly, "Demola, please let me tell you what I should have told you before we fell apart. It will explain why I was so guarded. It was not that I did not care for you. Please Demola, I will tell you and you can send me away if you want afterwards."

He turned towards me and looked me in the eyes. "I'm all ears," he said.

I took a deep breath and tried to calm my racing heart.

"My friend Salyra (Susan) Audu and I had just concluded our O level examinations and we stopped at her friends house on the way from school," I sniffled before continuing, "She said she just wanted to pick a DVD we planned on watching during the weekend. I waited outside but she did not come out. I got worried because my parents were very strict and would not take me come home late lightly. It was when I decided to go in and check what was taking so long. I walked in on..."

At that point I broke down in loud sobs and Demola put his arms around me. "Are you sure you can continue?" He asked gently.

"Yes. I need to talk about it." I replied, "So....I walked in on the guy Susan thought was her friend.."

Demola rubbed his hand down my back and whispered gently into my ears, "You do not have to continue."

"..It was not just him. Two of his friends also were involved."

Demola swore under his breath. "Bastards. They should suffer for what they did."

"She was screaming and asking me to help her, but I couldn't Demola," I cried, "One of the guy's friends grabbed me as I was about to run out but I escaped after poking him in the eyes with a pencil."

Demola continued to rub my back as I cried on his chest.

"I ran to call a trader near the house, but by the time we got back, they had all had their way. A trader gave her the cloth she wrapped around her body on the way home. Unfortunately, Susan was falsely accused of dating the boys secretly and falsely claiming that she was assaulted."

Demola rubbed my back as I continued sobbing, "She was treated at a clinic in the area and was at home, depressed for weeks. Her parents feared that their daughter would be stigmatized so they didn't demand justice for her....she fell sick and died a few weeks later."

Demola gasped and held me tighter. "It wasn't your fault. There was nothing else you could do."

"I suspect that she committed suicide and it was covered up," I sobbed.

"My parents saw how badly I was affected by losing my friend, so they relocated our family to Abeokuta. I was discouraged from talking about what happened."

Demola lifted my face with both hands. "Look at me Amara. Those bastards don't have the right to steal your joy.."

"You're right," I said, sniffing.

"Just for the record, someone I met at ABU that heard about what happened told me that the three guys died in a house fire some years later. The house burnt to the ground."

Demola wiped my tears with his thumbs and pulled me into another hug. "Let's go and sit down. You must be tired."

I breathed a sigh of relief.

All the tension of not knowing what to expect from Demola and telling that story had left me feeling so tired. Nevertheless, I felt as if a heavy load had been lifted off my chest.

Demola got me a cold glass of water and I leaned back in my chair as he held my hand. "You kept all that hurt and pain locked in for so long. Honey, I think you might have.."

"Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?..Yes, I know, I just refused to acknowledge it up until now. I realise that I need help and I will not sweep my hurt under the carpet any longer. I want to heal and move on."

Demola looked at me with admiration in his eyes, "I want to be by your side as you take your journey of recovery, Amara."

I squeezed his hand. "Thank you. Thank you so much."

I finally hugged him tighter than I had ever had before.

"I love you, Damilola Amarachi Oyelowo"

"I love you, Demola Adekunle Davies"

We sealed our confessions with a kiss.

***Two hearts, two hearts that beat as one, our lives have just begun
-Diana Ross and Lionel Richie (Endless Love)***

Demola kept his word and stayed by my side every step of the way as I attended counselling and we reconciled.

Our relationship got much better, stronger and sweeter than before.

Both of our families were so happy to see us resolve our dispute and neither bothered us with questions about the details.

After Demola explained all the details of what really happened to AB Konpo, I appealed to him for his forgiveness.

I do not support violence of any kind but who can say they would not have done likewise in that situation?

He presented all the evidence to support his explanation and said he later investigated the source of the e-mail I received.

It turned out to be a bitter ex business associate who was trying to break us up out of spite, with the long term plan of destabilizing him Demola.

The former associate had since been arrested and sued, facing a potential long prison sentence.

Demola said he kept a case file in his drawer and he must have broken into it.

I specialized as a gynaecologist and transferred from the Ikeja branch of Valley View to the Victoria Island branch.

It was a win-win arrangement. I continued working as a medical doctor and Demola and I spent more time with each other.

I didn't really keep close friends, after I lost Susan but I did my best to get along with people where ever I went. As I recovered, I became even closer with my colleagues at Valley View.

Isoken Bright, a hotel, catering and event manager and I became good friends and she even planned the first birthday party of my nephew, Niyi's first child.

Damola and I worked together to raise awareness about abuse and worked in partnership with human rights organizations to help the underprivileged to get justice.

It is often said that sometimes things fall apart in order to fall into place.

Such was the case of Demola and I.

Opening up and overcoming the hurt and the pain was a wonderful experience.

I became a better person and so did he. I could not think of a more perfect life partner for me.

We didn't fix everything for each other. We loved and supported each other as we took our journey side by side and found our way.

Demola and I organized a private end of year party and invited our families and closest associates.

It was held at the Flamingo House, Moon Crescent.

It was a thanksgiving to God, celebration of how far we had come and appreciation of the loved ones who stood by us.

The festive season was in the air and the hall was beautifully decorated like a winter wonderland.

Everyone was dancing, singing and having a lot of fun. There was lots of jollof rice and pounded yam with egusi and vegetable. Small chops (small buns, spring rolls) were also served and everyone was having a great time. The DJ was 'on point' too.

My dad danced with me and looked at me with a very sober look on his face. His eyes shone with happy tears as he said, "Damilola, I am so proud of you and you have my love and blessings always."

I hugged him, "Daddy, is everything alright?"

He patted my back and replied, "Everything will be glorious, now and always."

Shortly afterwards, Demola greeted my dad and asked him if he could dance with me. My dad pat him on the back as Demola took my hand.

Demola led me to the centre of the dance floor and we danced together. I laughed as her pulled me close and spun me round and around. Immediately after he stopped spinning me. All the lights dimmed.

"Obim, let me call the technical unit." I said.

Demola did not respond. I felt around but could not feel him.

"Obim! Obim! Ob.."

A bright white spotlight shone on me, and I saw Demola in front of me on one knee.

I put both hands on my mouth as I shed tears of joy.

"Damilola Amarachi, before I met you, I thought that love at first sight was impossible, but you changed that... *Some people around us giggled..* You are beautiful on the inside and the outside. You support and motivate me to be a better man honey and I appreciate you so much. You are everything I want and everything I will ever need in a life partner. Please be my wife."

I jumped up and down for joy as I said, "Yes! Yes! Yes!"

That is how I said yes to us continuing our journey together as husband and wife.

Not because of because of those annoying Uncle Femi's, brother Uche's, sister Risikat's and Aunty Ada's, reminding me EVERY SINGLE TIME about how I should be married with kids by now.

It was because I was finally ready to love without holding back, unconditionally, and to be loved back.

I also could not bear to imagine my life without Demola in it.

Two hearts that beat as one. Together forever.

THE END