

A NIGERIAN DREAM

CHAPTER 1: THE BEGINNING

The crying of the baby was so loud that it woke everyone in the hospital, even those in rooms far away from the maternity ward. The doctor, who was looking exhausted, called for Mr. Jide, the father of the newborn child. "Congratulations, sir," he said. "I will have the nurses get everything you need and make sure you get all of those medications." He shook Mr. Jide's hand again and then left the room.

Mr. Jide walked into the room slowly. He was still in shock from everything that had just happened. His wife, Omolara, had been in labor since the morning of the previous day, and she had finally given birth that night. He couldn't hold back the tears, even though they were tears of joy. He was holding his wife's hand when the doctor and nurses came in and placed the baby in her arms. "It's a girl," Mr. Jide said happily, looking down at the little girl in his wife's arms. He had been looking forward to this day ever since he and Omolara had decided to share the rest of their lives together. "We'll name her Folasade," he said almost silently, but the nurses could still hear him and giggled. "The oriki will be Ajoke," Omolara added, raising her head to look at her husband. "Folasade mi Ajoke," Mr. Jide said, almost to himself. But with the rain no longer falling and almost everyone in the hospital asleep, and the now silent room, his wife could hear him and smiled.

The naming ceremony was so big that everyone in the town couldn't stop talking about it for weeks. Adults and children alike couldn't go a day without talking about Oga Jide's child naming ceremony. Mr. Jide made sure that everyone they knew was there to witness the naming day of his daughter. All of his friends, even those who lived outside the country, came to honor their friend. Omolara's friends were even more numerous. From her childhood friends to her university friends, every member of the social clubs she was in was there. Dozens of music stars and movie stars were present as friends and entertainers. Politicians and other prominent people in the country were also in attendance.

By nightfall, almost everyone had left, except for close family members and friends. They stayed behind to pray for the child. Folasade grew up hearing stories about her iconic naming ceremony.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT DO WE WANT?

Jide sat in the living room, lost in thought about his only child's birth and naming ceremony. He remembered the day as if it were yesterday, as well as the day his daughter was accepted into the university to study architecture. Even though she had always wanted to study literature and become a writer, he had refused to allow it. He had made sure she was in a science class in high school and had also chosen architecture for her in the UTME exam, as he wanted his child to follow in his footsteps and become an architect.

"Those were the good times," Jide said quietly to himself as he exhaled. "What was that?" Omolara asked as she walked into the room, Jide was startled when he looked up and saw his wife. He hadn't noticed her come in. "When were the good times?" she asked again, breaking Jide's trance. "Nothing, my dear," he replied with a smile, trying to hide the sadness in his eyes. "I was just thinking about the times we used to go on dates and travel, you know, enjoying ourselves." "Well, we did go on vacation a few months ago," Omolara said as she walked over to him. "I know you're lying," she said, looking into her husband's eyes. "You're thinking about her, aren't you?" she asked, placing her hands on his cheeks. "You know she's an adult now," she said. "She knows what's right and wrong, and she can make her own decisions about her life. But she can't ruin it." Jide said, cutting her off His voice was a little angry as he looked away from her. "If anything happens to her, it happens to us," he said. "We can't let our only child just wake up one day and decide that this is what she wants to do without letting her know if it's wrong or right." "Omolara, she's our only child," he continued. "We can't afford anything to go wrong with her. If anything happens to her, where do we start from?"

CHAPTER 3: WHAT DO I WANT?

Folasade rolled over the grass of the school football field, facing her friend Gbemisola. The sky was getting dark, and they could hear the noise from the school centers where people were gathered to have fun. Lovers also found spots to enjoy their night in those places, and it was never not noisy. "I have been living my whole life trying to please my father and be whatever he wants me to be," Folasade said. "But this all ends very soon." "We should be on our way to the hostel," Gbemisola said. "You know I don't think it's worth it for you to throw all this away." "Architecture is arguably the most difficult course to study in university," she continued. "And you've managed to scale through to your final year, not only that but as a first-class student." "Maybe this is coming from someone who has worked so hard with you over the years," she said, knowing her friend might be angry about what she said. "Those sleepless nights in the studio, those horrific deadlines, and emotionally damaging presentations. I'm not sure anyone would be willing to throw that all away for something else."

"I get you, my friend," Folasade replied. "I also think about all this, but it's just that all this isn't me. I know what I love and I want to do what I love. All this you see isn't me. It's all my dad, and for once in my life, I want to do something for myself." "Well, I hope you know what you're doing," Gbemisola said. "And I pray God guides you through every step you make."

CHAPTER 4: A NIGERIAN DREAM

The rain was heavy as it had been for the past five days. Folasade had always heard about the seven days' rain in Lagos, but now it was falling on her head as she rushed into the office building. "Good morning," she greeted the security man at the gate. "Good morning, madam. Anything for us?" he replied. "Remind me tomorrow," Folasade answered him as she moved into the building. Everyone out there thinks we in here are rich, she said in her head. Well, they are having it worse, she added as she sat down in her cubicle.

"The boss wants to see you," Ola said to her from behind. Ola is the only friend she has at work. He has always been nice to her since the day she started working at The Daily Mail newspaper. "Did I do anything wrong?" she asked. "I don't think so," he answered. Folasade stood up and made her way to the elevator. She greeted everyone she met on the way.

"Ding" the sound of the elevator bell brought her mind back. Hopefully, this is not a bad thing, she said to herself as she stepped out of the elevator. "What does he want to see me for?" she whispered to the secretary. "No idea," she answered. "Good morning, ma. Sorry, good morning, sir," she stammered as she struggled to greet her boss. "Anything wrong?" he asked. "Nothing, sir," she answered. Even though Mr. Ogunlere is a very nice and gentle person, everyone in the office knows not to be on his wrong side because he is as strict as he is gentle. "Have a seat," he said to her, pointing at the two chairs in front of his desk. "How are you? And how is work?" he asked. "I'm fine, sir, and work has been great," she answered. "Well, that's great because it's about to get better," he said while bringing something out of his desk. Congratulations, you are finally getting your own personal page on the paper. "Thank you, sir," she said, while trying to conceal her joy, but it could show with the smile on her face.

"I know this can be very challenging, but I always see your work and how hardworking you are. The editors and I have decided that you are the best person we could pick." "Best of luck," he said while handing her an envelope.

Ola drove his car into Ketu market. It was not the first time coming to the market with Folasade, so he knew where she got her groceries from. "It's been how many months since you last talked to your dad?" he asked as they walked through the market. "Close to ten months," Folasade said, avoiding eye contact with him. "You know you should talk to him," Ola said. "No matter how much you run from him, he's still

your father. And he's done everything he can for you." "I talk to my mom every week," Folasade said. "I know," Ola said. "But that's not the same thing. You need to talk to your dad too." Folasade didn't say anything. She knew Ola was right, but she just wasn't ready to talk to her father yet. They finished shopping and got back in the car. The rest of the journey to Folasade's house was quiet.

CHAPTER 5: FAMILIA

The sound of the telephone ringing made them look up. Jide and his wife had been in the house the whole day. They were in the living room when the telephone connected to the entrance started ringing. They usually knew beforehand if anyone was visiting, so it was a surprise to them when the phone started ringing. "Who could be calling by this time?" Jide asked. "Maybe it's one of the neighbors," his wife answered as she stood up to check who it was. "Hello, who is this?" she asked. She looked shocked from whatever the person on the other end said, which made Jide stand up and move closer to her. "It's your daughter," she said, more like a whisper with a smile on her lips and tears dropping from her eyes. "She is outside." Jide didn't bother to hear the rest as he hurriedly picked the gate key and they both rushed outside to open the gate. It had been five years since they last saw their only child, five years since she graduated from university.

"I know how you are going to feel about this, but for once in my life I'm going to do something for myself, not for people around me. I've decided to pursue my dream in writing," she said in the letter that took the joy of his only child graduating away from him.

He was furious that day as he kept asking why, but he couldn't even remember what he was mad about now. Omolara opened the gate and as her daughter walked in, she gave her a hug. She couldn't hold her tears and neither could her husband as he moved closer to them. "So, what happened?" Jide asked his daughter immediately they entered the house. "At least let her rest before you start asking her all these questions," his wife said from the kitchen. "It's all fine, mom," Folasade answered. "I also think this is the best time to have this discussion.

"You know, five years ago," she started, "when I walked out through that door, I thought to myself, Folasade, you are a good writer, a brilliant one. All you need is to keep doing what you love and surely you will get whatever you want. But dad, it doesn't work that way in the real world. Every big publisher out there that I talked to doesn't want to help unless they know you or they know they are getting something from you. The small-scale ones that want to help have nothing to offer. No one is willing to invest in a rookie when they don't know what they are getting from them. "Some nights I sit down thinking maybe I should call you and you could place a call for me to be given a chance, but I couldn't, because of the embarrassment." "You shouldn't be embarrassed," her father cut her short. "No matter how angry I was at that moment when you left, I will always be there for you." "Well, I tried a couple of writing competitions," Folasade continued, "and it was as if the winners were picked even before the competition. With each one I did, I kept asking myself, maybe I just wasn't good enough. I mean, there

are millions of writers better than me and deserve to win. Maybe I wasn't special as I thought." "Don't say that, my dear," her father said, putting his hand on her head. "You know, when you left, I was missing you and went to your room. I found some of your old writings and Ajoke, you are the best writer I know." Her father rarely called her by that name, which she was told her mother gave her in the hospital she was born. "You read my all my pieces?" Folasade asked, her face beaming with joy. "Yes, I did, my daughter," he said. "And I'm willing to help you in every way possible to achieve your dreams."

"How are you doing now?" he asked as he looked up to check the time. It was 10pm. Folasade had arrived about an hour ago. Being in the house made her realize how much she had missed being inside it. The warmth and the paint color that made the whole interior of the house soothing. The way the colors were carefully mixed, with a very light pink being the focal point of the color, and the well-arranged furniture that carefully adhered to having great spatial analysis. Her father had designed every bit of the building, down to picking the grass to be used outside or the color of each object in the house. Sometimes she wondered why she didn't like architecture, being that she had grown up inside an architectural masterpiece. "Fola," her father called, breaking her away from her admiration of the house she had grown up in. "Everything changed about a year and a half after I left home when I met Ola," she said. "How is Ola?" her mother asked as she stepped into the dining room with the food in her hands. "He's fine," Folasade answered. "Dad, let me go and help Mum with that," she said as she stood up to help her mother with setting the table. "You know, Dad, I'll always be grateful to you for making me study architecture. Being in that school helped shape who I am today. "Fola, you don't have to say all this," her father said. "It's getting late. We should get to bed. We can continue this tomorrow."

CHAPTER 6: THE FUTURE WE ALL WANT

"you act like you are good

but deep down you know you've never been there for me all my life

you think everything is cool

as long as you pay fees, give me food but you don't even know what going by my side

you play me for fool

and drag me along all your life you don't care about how it hurts me all the negativities that it's brought into my life

I seriously hope I die one day maybe that will ease all the pain I'm making you go through

but I don't know what I'm going to meet afterward and if I will be allowed to go through

A Sad Nigerian Teen"

Folasade raised her head up from the book in her hands to look outside, she tried checking if she could see anything below but it was all cloud. Anytime she is on a plane it reminds her of when she was small and she will go on vacations with her parents. Maybe I was overreacting she thought to herself going through the poem again, I mean I was a young, naive and angry teenager. She looked over to her husband, Ola she called I'm going on my own book tour she said which sounds like she still doesn't believe it happening, yes you are he replied her as she held her hand.