

BUILDING BRIDGES: THE SUPERNATURAL ENCOUNTER

Raindrops pelted the windshield of her father's car as it cruised along the winding roads of Ibadan. Enioluwa stared out into the blurry world beyond, her thoughts drifting back to the events that had transpired over the past few days. They had made the long journey from Ibadan to Lagos for the somber occasion of her late paternal grandfather's burial. Enioluwa had met most of her extended family for the first time, rekindling connections that had dimmed over the years. The gathering had been a blend of grief and celebration, as family members shared stories and memories of the departed. Her mother, Dr. Abimbola Aderoju, had also seized the opportunity to take Enioluwa and her brother to her own family house in Lagos. It was a quaint, time-worn building that held generations of history and memories. Enioluwa had been fascinated by the treasures she found there, especially the belongings of her grandmother. Among the old trunks and dusty shelves, she discovered a few vintage dresses that once belonged to her grandmother and decided to claim them as her own.

As the rain continued to fall, Enioluwa couldn't help but feel a mix of emotions—nostalgia for the past, curiosity about her family's history, and the weight of her own aspirations. The journey back to Ibadan was a return not only to her childhood home but also to the dreams and responsibilities that awaited her in the city she calls home.

As the car eased through the streets of Ibadan, the rhythmic patter of raindrops on the car's roof provided a soothing backdrop to her father's musings. Dr. Aderoju glanced over at his daughter, Enioluwa, and smiled, "Did you notice how the traffic eased up once we got into Ibadan? None of that Lagos 'fight for road' anymore." Enioluwa chuckled, the breath from her nose making a mist on the car window and she drew a heart on it and watched how it slowly faded away her gaze still fixed on the rain-slicked window. The transition from Lagos to Ibadan always struck her as remarkable. The relentless hustle and bustle of the city gave way to a more serene pace in Ibadan, a deliberate choice her parents had made. As her father continued to drive, Enioluwa's thoughts drifted to the reasons why her family lived in Ibadan while most of her extended family remained in Lagos. It was a decision steeped in the dreams and memories of her parents' own upbringing and the values they held dear, a choice to preserve a quieter way of life.

Enioluwa, an old soul at heart, had always felt a unique comfort in the presence of those older than her. It wasn't just a matter of age; it was the wisdom, the stories, and the traditions that she cherished. She had a reputation for being a respectful and considerate young woman, traits instilled in her by her parents.

In her social life, Enioluwa was a curious and engaging teenager. She found solace in the pages of old books and the echoes of ancient stories. Conversations with her peers often veered into discussions about history, culture, and the mysteries of life. It was in these moments that she truly thrived, her insatiable curiosity leading her to ask questions that both challenged and enlightened those around her.

Mrs. Abimbola Aderoju, was the eldest of three siblings in her family. Her father had passed away when she was in her pre-teen years, leaving her mother to raise the children on her own. Unfortunately, her mother was perceived to have mental health issues, as she often spoke of seeing things that weren't there. This experience deeply affected Abimbola, and she developed a profound compassion for individuals who struggled with mental health challenges, particularly

schizophrenic patients. Her upbringing, marked by hardship and love for her mother, eventually motivated her to study medicine at the University of Ibadan, specializing in neuropsychiatry.

Dr. Aderoju, Enioluwa's father, had majored in pediatrics during his medical studies. His calm and caring nature made him a natural fit for working with children. He shared Abimbola's dream of raising their children in a nurturing environment and was instrumental in their decision to relocate to Ibadan.

Enioluwa's younger brother, Iyinoluwa, or "Iyin" for short, was just 13 years old. Despite the typical sibling rivalry, they shared a strong bond. Enioluwa often played a protective role in her brother's life, guided by the values and morals instilled by their parents.

As the car continued its journey through the rain-soaked streets of Ibadan, Enioluwa's thoughts drifted between the past and the present. The decision to move to Ibadan had been about more than just avoiding traffic; it had been a conscious choice to provide their children with a nurturing environment where they could grow and thrive.

The Aderoju family arrived back home, and the process of unpacking commenced. Enioluwa's excitement was palpable as she gently extracted the vintage clothes she had claimed from her grandmother's. Each garment seemed to hold a piece of history, a tangible connection to a woman she had only heard about in hushed family conversations.

As the family gathered around the dinner table, the soft, unrelenting patter of raindrops on the windowpane provided an intimate backdrop to their conversation. Enioluwa, eager to share her experiences, couldn't contain her enthusiasm as she spoke about her time at her grandmother's house. She described the old photographs, the faint scent of aging wood, and the feeling of warmth that seemed to envelop her there.

Her mother listened with a faint smile, her eyes revealing a blend of nostalgia and melancholy. She had always been reticent about discussing her late mother, and Enioluwa had learned not to press further on this topic. Still, the unspoken curiosity lingered—an unquenchable desire to know more about the grandmother she had never met.

The rain outside showed no sign of relenting, its constant rhythm punctuating the conversation. The windows, firmly closed, created an atmosphere that would linger in their memories forever—a comforting cocoon of family togetherness in the midst of nature's symphony.

Following the family meal, they joined together for their nightly prayers. Enioluwa's parents retreated to their rooms, but her younger brother, Iyinoluwa, tagged along as she headed to her own room.

Enioluwa's room was more than a physical space; it was a reflection of her character, her passions, and her profound connection to her roots. It was her sanctuary. The walls bore witness to her love for history, adorned portraits of iconic female figures from the nation's past and present, and shelves lined with books that chronicled the rich tapestry of Nigerian literature, history, and folklore.

A small desk sat neatly arranged with meticulously kept notebooks and an assortment of pens, a testament to her penchant for research and her insatiable curiosity. It was here, in this intimate corner, that Enioluwa explored the depths of her intellect, transcribing her thoughts and discoveries.

As Iyinoluwa entered the room, he couldn't help but be drawn into the world his sister had created. He found her realm of books and history captivating, even if he didn't grasp all the nuances of her interests. There was something profoundly comforting about being in Enioluwa's room—a space that emanated warmth, wisdom, and an invitation to explore.

Enioluwa carefully laid out the vintage clothes on her bed. The room seemed to come alive as she delicately touched each fabric. "Look at these, Iyin," she said, her voice filled with wonder and admiration. "Grandma must have been incredibly stylish."

The rain, undeterred by the passage of time, continued its gentle dance on the windowpanes, creating a melodic symphony that harmonized with the emotions swirling in the room. The sound of raindrops was a reminder of the world outside, of nature's embrace, Enioluwa held close to her heart.

Iyinoluwa, always the practical one, smiled and suggested, "You know, there's 'Heritage Day' coming up at church. You could wear one of these outfits to celebrate our culture."

Enioluwa's eyes lit up at the idea. She recognized that this moment transcended mere clothing; it was a bridge between generations, a tangible link to the past that bound her to her roots. She nodded, her heart brimming with gratitude for the chance to connect with her heritage in such a meaningful way.

As Enioluwa began to try on the clothes, each garment, though aged, embraced her like a cherished memory, fitting her form and spirit with a sense of belonging. It was a profound moment of connection, a harmonious convergence of past and present,

As Enioluwa gently slipped into her grandmother's "Oleku"—a vibrant ensemble that held decades of stories and traditions—she felt a profound connection to her family's heritage. The room enveloped her in an aura of nostalgia and reverence, and the mirror before her reflected not only the image of a young girl wearing her grandmother's clothes but also the intangible link between generations.

Each garment, though aged, embraced her like a cherished memory, fitting her form and spirit with a sense of belonging. It was as if her grandmother's essence lingered in the fabric, guiding her through this moment of profound connection—a harmonious convergence of past and present.

Suddenly, as she stood there in her grandmother's attire, there was a bright lightning flash that seared across the darkened room, followed by a deafening boom of thunder that seemed to shake the very foundations of the house. The lights flickered and then went out, plunging the room into an inky blackness.

Enioluwa felt different, her senses heightened. She had a nagging feeling that this was more than just a storm. The rain outside had ceased, and an eerie silence had settled in. The room grew colder, and it felt like the colors had drained from her surroundings. Goosebumps prickled her skin, and her hair stood on end.

As she stood in the darkness, fixated on the spot where the mirror once hung, she saw a figure slowly materialize in the room, emerging from her bedroom door. The woman was stout and adorned in attire that seemed plucked from a different era—a resplendent "Ipele" and an exquisite "Gele". The colors were muted, and the entire scene resembled a snapshot from a black-and-white early '80s movie.

Recognition dawned on Enioluwa. This was her grandmother, Iya Abeni, the woman her mother rarely spoke of. The room felt like a bridge between the realms of the living and the departed.

Enioluwa's heart raced, but her grandmother's presence exuded warmth and familiarity. She felt an inexplicable calm settle over her. Iya Abeni smiled, and Enioluwa knew she was in the presence of a loved one.

Iya Abeni began to speak, her voice carrying a resonance that seemed to echo through the dimensions. "Enioluwa," she said, "you are in the middle world, a place where Olodumare grants us the opportunity to visit our loved ones on this sacred day. But time is fleeting here, my child."

Enioluwa, her voice trembling with a mix of awe and curiosity, asked, "What is this place, Grandma?"

Iya Abeni explained, "We are in the realm between Orun, the heavens, and Aye, the earthly world. It is a space where the past, present, and future converge."

As Iya Abeni led Enioluwa towards the door she had emerged from, a sense of anticipation filled the room. Enioluwa, still clad in her grandmother's oleku set, took a tentative step forward. But when she crossed the threshold, it wasn't into the familiar hallway of her home.

Instead, they found themselves standing on the streets of Lagos. The transformation was startling, as if they had stepped into a different era altogether. Neon signs and bustling crowds had given way to a quieter, more nostalgic scene.

Before Iya Abeni could even explain, Enioluwa's sharp perception kicked in. She looked around and, with a mixture of awe and realization, pointed out, "This is Lagos, but not the Lagos I know. It's the Lagos of the 1980s."

Iya Abeni's eyes twinkled with delight as she admired her perceptive granddaughter. "You are indeed a smart child, Enioluwa," she chuckled. "Your mother is lucky to have you."

In this 1980s Lagos, Enioluwa would come to experience a world that existed before her time, a vibrant and different era that held its own secrets and stories waiting to be discovered.

As Enioluwa and her grandmother conversed, they delved into the tapestry of their family's history. Iya Abeni walked Enioluwa through the timelines of her own life, recounting cherished moments, her daughter's milestones.

The young girl listened with rapt attention, feeling more intimately connected to her grandmother than she had ever imagined. She learned of her grandmother's resilience, her joys, and her sorrows. The room transformed into a portal through time, a place where Enioluwa felt not only the weight of her heritage but also the strength and love that bound her family together.

Iya Abeni's stories spanned the decades. Enioluwa walked alongside her grandmother, witnessing the bright-eyed wonder of her mother's primary school graduations, the moments of laughter and tears during family gatherings, and the day her mother had introduced Dr. Aderoju as her suitor—a moment that had set the course for Enioluwa's own existence.

With each step through time, Enioluwa felt herself drawing closer to the grandmother who had once seemed so enigmatic and distant. The stories were like threads weaving together the tapestry of her family's legacy, connecting her to a heritage she had only glimpsed from afar.

In an instant, as if the fabric of reality had been gently folded and unfolded, Enioluwa and Iya Abeni found themselves back in the familiar confines of Enioluwa's room. The room's atmosphere felt different now, a blend of the ordinary and the extraordinary. Enioluwa's curiosity still burned, and she couldn't help but ask the question that had lingered in her mind like an unspoken secret.

"Grandma," Enioluwa began, her voice soft but filled with determination, "what about the stories of your mental illness? Why did people think you were silly?"

Iya Abeni chuckled, her laughter carrying the weight of wisdom and a hint of melancholy. "My dear," she replied, "when I returned from the middle world, I tried to share my experiences with others. I spoke of the visits from my own mother, just as I've visited you. But in those days, it wasn't as common for such stories to be believed. They deemed me silly, and the label stuck."

Their time together in the room was drawing to a close, and they shared a heartfelt farewell. Iya Abeni's words carried a sense of reassurance and love, promising that this was not the end of their connection.

Enioluwa approached the mirror, her heart heavy with the knowledge of her family's history and the realization that her grandmother had not been crazy. As she gazed into the glass, the room seemed to come back to life. The lights flickered to life, and the colors returned to their vibrant hues. She could hear her brother's voice once more, recounting the thunderous boom that had echoed through the night.

It felt as though no time had passed at all, even though it had felt like hours in the company of Iya Abeni. Enioluwa listened to her brother's account of the storm but found herself lost in thought, grappling with the extraordinary experience she had just lived through.

The next morning, as the family gathered around the breakfast table, Enioluwa remained unusually quiet. Her thoughts swirled with the weight of her newfound knowledge and the desire to share the truth. Her family noticed her preoccupation and tried to get her attention.

Suddenly, Enioluwa blurted out, her words breaking the silence, "I spoke to Grandma last night, Iya Abeni."

The room fell into stunned silence. Her mother choked on her tea, her father and brother wide-eyed with disbelief. Enioluwa's revelation hung in the air, a cliffhanger that left them all wondering how her mother would react to this startling revelation and what it would mean for their family.