

# A Bed of Wildflowers

*A short story*

By

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## **Dedication**

This story is dedicated to everyone trying to find their voices in a world full of over 8 billion people.

“This child cannot be ours! Over my dead body will this be my grandchild.” This was the last thing Ifearewa heard before their voices started to echo and she got drowned in her thoughts.

This was the third time this week Ifearewajesu and her husband would be receiving a visit from his family. She was not shocked by their frequent visits; rather she was taken aback by her family questioning the paternity too.

Of course Ola is the father! However, since Araoluwa was recently diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, the paternity of the child suddenly became a problem.

"Ola!!! We don't have children who are imperfect in our household", his mother shouted, snapping her fingers, taking off her head gear and crying. "Stand up to your wife and tell her to return that baby to wherever she brought her from," she continued.

She has done this every time she came. She was surprised by her choice of words though. She has cared for Araoluwa for two years, but all of a sudden, she was no longer her grandchild.

She turned to face Ola, who was watching his family put on a show in their living room while holding his hands to his chin.

Standing up, Ifearewa shook her head and walked away from their drama. His mother kept crying uncontrollably but eventually left with other family members.

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Butterfly fluttering is real, or perhaps this is Doyin's true love, and all the other feelings she felt in the past were just to pass the time. As Doyinsola opened the door to welcome the Yin to her Yang, she was stunned by her ecstatic state.

Having suffered a fair share of heartbreaks, it may be a reason this felt surreal. She met Zayden at a W.H.O summit in London, and her love life has taken a turn around.

“Isn’t that my Bambino” Zayden said

She smiled at him, “Yes, it is your bambino”, before bending and kissing her deeply on the lips.

“I missed you so much” he said after the kiss

“I missed you much more, I ordered from our favorite spot down the road, the meal should be delivered soon.”

“How’s the book coming along?” He asked as he wheeled her to the room.

“Pretty well, almost done with the fourth chapter.” She feels good she made the decision to finally tell her story.

Her journey through rejection, days of crying, and discrimination, yet she overcame all.

Doyinsola began blogging a while back after she was rejected for jobs the fifth time.

She grew up in an orphanage after being abandoned by family members who believed she was a burden after losing her parents in a terrible accident and being wheelchair-bound, so she was accustomed to being rejected.

She was on the verge of committing suicide due to the transition from being able to walk to using wheels, but she overcame it with the assistance of the orphanage.

She then became one of the kids selected to get aid from the Olasokoya Adeniji Fundraising to help children with disabilities attend school. She was incredibly grateful for this opportunity.

She realised she couldn't give in to their cruel remarks when she entered every interview and saw eyes staring at her either to pity her or finally reject her. She needed to do more, and she soon found her fit.

She wanted people to understand what it was like to be a part of the world while still feeling left out because others think you are inferior to them. She began to express her opinions on the injustice on social media, and after a while, her work began to be recognised.

W.H.O, U.N., and many other international and national organisations have reached out to sponsor her work and also raise funds for kids living with disabilities.

"What’s going through your mind, my bambino?" His words pierced her thoughts and brought her back to the moment. She shrugged and smiled at him.

He took her hands and kissed them; he lifted her and placed her on the bed. They kissed for so long. They know how to do this; they can communicate with their bodies.

He took his lips to her neck, left kisses there, started unbuttoning her shirt, and when her shirt was out of the way, he looked at her and said, "You’re so beautiful, and you complete me."

A tear dropped from her eyes, and they went ahead to sync in bed later that night. All she thought of was the perfection in the moment.

No one has ever treated her this well. She remembered Remi. Remi would look at her and tell her he loved her, yet he hurt her, always saying condescending things about her disability. Sometimes, she wondered how one could love and hurt so much.

This place is her solace, and even if this ends tomorrow, She'll cherish this moment forever.

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Ifearewa's old university friend Tanya paid a visit. In their minimalist living room, which was adorned with a tonne of artwork, she played with Ara as they watched episodes of the Korean television series Law School.

She decorated the home to their tastes when they first moved there, since she was more interested in their home setting.

She saw to it that the cushions were light grey in colour and the walls were painted plain white. She placed a flower vase on the centre table as a reminder of how bloomy their lives were, and hung an artwork of the Lagos market (Eko) on the wall directly across from the TV.

This was the only artwork she chose, others were chosen by Ola. There were two family portraits, one of their wedding and the other at Ara's naming ceremony, as well as lampshades beside the cushions to add beauty and subtle lighting to the living room.

After the tenth episode, Tanya said she wanted to talk to her and She gave her the go-ahead. "What do you want to do with Ara?" Tanya asked.

"What do you mean by that question?" She responded.

"Ife, I don't want you to be offended by what I've got to say but Ara isn't like other kids, Ara is autistic, I know it took you and Ola a lot to give birth to her, but you may want to consider other options."

"Tanya, are you one of them as well? I believed you to be my friend and that you genuinely cared about Ara." My voice was about to reach its peak pitch.

"Ife, I love Araoluwa, she's a beautiful kid, but-"

"But what? Araoluwa is autistic, so? She is not the first and definitely won't be the last! Ola and I will look after her, give her the best of everything, and help her achieve great things."

"Ife, I'm not fighting you, I'm just saying you may want to consider other options like orphanage. You'd still get to-"

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"Get out of my house, Tanya! And never come back. I don't deserve to call you my friend. The next time I see you here, I'll call the police on you. Let me tell you, no one will take care of my child while I'm still alive, and she'll become the best."

"Ola, I-" Without giving a thought to what she was going to say next, she slammed the door in Tanya's face. She breathed and exhaled while leaning her head against the door.

She ran up the stairs two at a time after hearing her baby sobbing. She carried her baby out of her cot. She gave her a kiss and tried to calm down her sobbing by singing and lightly stamping her feet.

Life can be unjust, but Ara deserved all the chances, including the ability to play with other children when she grows up without their making fun of her, as well as the ability to have her family support and believe in her.

The cruel world will treat her beautiful kid harshly in all spheres because life has played its hand and left her with a disability.

A hand brushed her back as she was still absorbed in her thoughts. She turned to see Ola, she grinned at him.

"Ifemi, we can do this", he said as he kissed her forehead and wrapped his arms around her waist. As a tear fell from her eye, she clung tightly to him.

Later that evening, she asked him the question that had been groping her mind since Tanya left.

"Would you ever consider giving up our baby to an orphanage?" She asked him,

"No, why?" He looked at her and said, "Ifemi, I'd never give up on us or on her." He looked at her again, and she nodded.

"Why did you ask?"

She told him what happened with Tanya, and he told her to shrug it off and let it slide.

So, she shrugged it off. That night, they went on to stir their sexual passion, and she went ahead to give him a blowjob until all he said was her name.

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Everything was dark, and she didn't want to ruin the surprise by first looking through Zayden's blindfold. So she'd let him do his thing.

"Where are we going?" Doyinsola asked,

"It's funny when you ask this kind of question because you know you won't get an answer." He took her hands in his and gently stroked them.

She felt at ease in the cool evening air and was eager to find out what he had in store for her this evening.

He slid her up the ramp, and she smiled as she thought back to a post she made on her blog sometime ago about how Nigerian outlets were indifferent towards people living with disabilities and didn't provide ramps for better access to buildings with stairs.

"Are you ready to see this?" He asked, she nodded and he opened her eyes.

She had to squint her eyes a few times to adjust them to the light. She looked around, then she saw candles and the flowers that adorned the pathway to where those words are: "It was always you, Doyinsola".

There were pictures of their blossoming relationship and drapes of dwali lights across the canopy on the rooftop.

"Doyinsola, I had so many words in my head, and they were flawless, but now it seems like I'd mince words. I love you so much, and I've always wanted to make this last forever, so let me take your hands and be your husband."

She was so stunned that it took her a few seconds to respond. She nodded yes.

"Yes!!!! Zayden, I'd love to be your wife, to watch you every day of my life, and to smile at the best decision of my life."

He kissed her and put the ring on her finger. If someone had told her years ago she'd be here, it'd almost be unbelievable, from having zero jobs because of her disability to facing heartbreaks because she wasn't fit for them, and here she is, a wildflower who has made a fresh start from all life has thrown her way.

It all started as an empty dream chase, but now she has learned that she's more than her disability, despite all that life has thrown at her, and she's ready for this new life that awaits her.

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Ifearewa instructed the gateman to stop letting people in after Tanya's incident. Ola traveled to Abuja and on his day back, She went to the market to buy ingredients to make pepper soup and Yam for him.

She glanced at the watch, saw that he was more than an hour late and tried to reach him again to no end. She was starting to panic and the call she made to his friend proved negative.

Her phone beeped, and she tapped the new notification to see a mail from Ola.

*“Ifemi, I know you’re expecting me and you’re tensed; I’m fine, and I really wish I didn’t have to do this, but I can’t help it.*

*Every time I look at Ara, I can’t help but imagine the faces of all our friends and families. Do you remember how parents tried to separate their kids from her at Tony Son’s birthday party?*

*I still have that image in my head. I feel so heartbroken each time because I know this cycle will never end.*

*People will continue to look at her this way; she’ll grow up knowing she’s different, going to a special school, finding it hard to get a good job, and she can rarely ever prove to be enough.*

*They would laugh at her; in this world of able-bodied men, they’ll invalidate her dreams and aspirations, and I can’t watch her grow to be that person.*

*I can’t do it. Ifemi, I couldn’t bring myself to ask that we take her to an orphanage, but I know you’d be crushed. I know I’m such a coward, and that’s why I left the house for you.*

*I love you so much; I’d never stop loving you. I love Araoluwa too, and you’ll forever remain in my heart.*

*I’m so sorry for giving up on us.*

*With love,*

*Ola.”*

After reading it, she screamed, grabbed her phone and threw it against the wall. Araoluwa winced in her crib and began whimpering. She walked over to her crib, hugged her and tried to calm Ara, while holding back her tears. Instead, she sobbed for what she had lost and what she had presently. She resented Ola for allowing them to win.

Did he truly believe that leaving the house to her would make her feel better as memories of the vows they made to one another kept resurfacing? Never!

He was the only source of strength she had, and she always trusted him. Jokes on her, he was worse than a coward since he truly let his family affect him.

Although she had always understood that the world was harsh, she had thought that Ola would rather die than give up on children.

Not that she hadn't thought of placing Ara in an orphanage, but she deserved to be loved by her family, and she isn't going to give up on her now that she is all that Ara has, just as she is all that she has.

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When Doyinsola's name was called, there were applause and a standing ovation. It was time once more to show the world her face and share her journey so far.

As her husband pushed her outside the building after the summit organised by JONAPWD (Joint National Association of Persons Living with Disabilities), someone yelled her name.

"Hey! I'm Ifearewa, and although you might not recognize me, Doyinsola, I contacted you a few weeks ago after reading your blog posts." Ifearewa remarked

"Oohh, I remember you"

"Could you give me a little of your time? I'd love to speak with you"

Doyinsola nodded, and told Zayden to wait for her, while they found a shade under a tree to sit.

"Doyinsola, I'm revered by your vision, It's good to read your story and see how far you've come, I want my daughter to be able to live good life too, and to become an influence despite all that has happened, I want her to be a wildflower like you, to live her life free of all the stereotypes."

"I'm proud of your decision, a lot of kids living with disabilities are abandoned on the streets, orphanages, and despite all odds, you've chosen to love your daughter, and be her family. That's something I lost a long time ago, with you by her side, she has a shoulder to lean on and help her find the right path." Doyinsola said

"Thank you so much Doyin"

This was the encouragement she needed. She knew it'd not be easy, but she vowed to make sure Ara would survive the prejudice she would face and that she would have her back at every turn.