

This White Wall.

It's been 3 months since Shola passed and I finally looked out of the room today, I I took a good glimpse at the sky, the sky was in a mood, it was dark like an angry soldier, the wind blew like it was late and in a hurry for a meeting, the heavens sounded like a woman in labor, thunder and lightnings were singing her praises. The coming rain was clearly an impending danger, soon everywhere would be flooded, gutters would be blocked, dirt would crowd the streets, the air would be dense, Nkpo would live up to its name as the city with the world's worst air. I still remember what Nkpo looks and feels like when it rains.

The compound is seemingly quiet today, Njideka and her step children are not having a brawling match, only the sound of Dike's overused generator that is as loud as the sound of the children of Israel marching round Jericho the seventh time is competing with the incessant thunder storms, not even Nkem the ever busy compound gossip is outside her room.

I sat restlessly on my little bed void of any form of bedsheets or covering, just holes made by the angry rats that has become my companions over this period. I hadn't written any letters to Shola today. I tore out a piece of white paper and started scribbling words.

Oremi,

I still stare at the wall.

I can't help it Shola, I still stare at the wall, you know the white wall right before the door that leads to the bathroom, adjacent to the door that leads to the balcony, the place we keep our little white stool and white doormat. Where you do your little dance right before you get into the shower, where you stand to scold me, to hold me, advice me and soothe me. I still see flashes of you in your favorite black shorts, hands wrapped round your chest with that hypnotic stare of yours that makes my heart palpitate. I've tried to paint it the same color like the rest of the room, Temi said I should that it will help with my hallucinations but I can't bring myself to, you liked it plain white, you called it "our little shrine". I know it looked dumb to every one, even to me at first but now I get it, now I see why you felt safest in the wall. It's not just the color that is different from the rest of the room, it's the aura, it's the sense of belonging it gave us, it's where our spirits first bonded, where we said our first words to each other. On the days I can't feel anything, on the days I do not know if I'm hurting or healing, I drag myself to the wall wearing one of your favorite shirts and I stand in your shadow on the wall. In my head I complete you, you wearing the shorts, me wearing the shirt. I wrap my hands around myself and I

imagine you hugging me and I stand in the wall for hours till my legs fail me and my eyes get so blurry from crying that I can't see a thing. Then I slump, slump right to the ground.

It's been 3 months since you passed and I haven't left our room yet, I feel like if I leave I'll never get to see flashes of you on the wall again. I know I'm not trying, everybody says so and I know so too but what do they know, they never knew you like I did because if they did they'll sure know it's impossible to get over you. My therapist says I should write unfiltered, uncensored thoughts to you, that way I get to keep our line of communication open. I do not believe in all that BS but I've decided to try, to just try, maybe try once a week but at least I get to try. Someone once wrote, "someone that meant everything to you could die and the next day the sun would rise as usual, and your neighbor would put on Bob Marley and loudly lip sync 'no woman no cry' and the street outside would be busy as usual, and the loud honks of buses reminding you that other people were moving while you were at standstill" — and I hate it, I hate that this is the reality, I hate everybody for going on like the best person I knew isn't soaked in formaldehyde at the moment. Don't they feel what I'm feeling, or was I the only one that loved you? Why is it hard for me to speak or look, why does my breath cut short for seconds and I feel it all ending, why does the pain wake me up from my sleep, why does my heart

ache so much it feels like my brain is on fire, why do I get cramps from so much pain, Adeshola tell me why. My therapist says if I ask you questions that you'll answer so here I am, Adeshola Orekelewa Bimbo what am I to do?

Or maybe it's the guilt, maybe that's why I'm still stuck in your gray bunny shirt, the very big one you love to wear on your sad days because according to you it helps hide all the parts of you that reminds you of a pain from long ago that you wish to forget. Maybe that's why I'm still lying in bed with your clothes all over me, trying to hold onto your scent. Maybe it's the guilt yet to come, knowing fully well that time and chance will help me heal even if I'm not willing to, that a year from now I won't feel like this and memories that I hold so dear will start getting vague. Maybe I'm scared I will forget bits of you that I've known for the longest, the way you titter when your favorite song comes on, the way you yawn with your mouth half closed and it looks like you are struggling to breathe. Maybe I already feel guilty because I sleep better now than I did 2 weeks ago and I know that in the coming weeks it'll get easier, but do I want it to get easier, I'm not sure oremi. I'm still waiting in our room, I'm waiting for you to call and tell me you're on your way home with the ingredients for the fish stew, I need to hear that excitement in your voice, the one when you finally find that urhobo woman that sells the exact type of catfish you

like. Now I wish I followed you to the market more often, all the times you begged me to just go with you, I would have gotten to spend more time with you.

Everybody seems to be mourning you loudly, even the girlies that made it obvious that they didn't like you, all with swollen eyes and running noses coming into our room to pay some sort of condolence visit. I know it's the polite thing to do but I want to scream at them, scream so loud and call them all sorts of names but I can't, my throat is so dry and I'm saving my last strength to see you on the wall tonight. You remember Ediomomo, the scruffy looking girl with the broken tooth, she had the guts to come in the room today with your blue bucket, the one she took from you because according to her you broke her bucket, turns out she was just jealous of you like I told you and she admitted to it. I almost used that bucket on her, I wanted to hit it on her head badly and watch her skull crack open but Temi saw my temper rising and held my hand as she gave her stupid speech. Ooh and Rufus came today slobbering and sniffing, according to him you were his first love but he had the audacity to break your heart just 3 days to your first professional exam, we should have arranged area boys to beat him up then, maybe he wouldn't have shown his long ugly face here today talking about love, like he knows a thing about love kpecheww, Ekeme also came looking like a plague set upon Egypt from on high.

Adeshola remember how we joked that when we die our ghosts will haunt all the people we did not like, I think you'll have to do that for the both of us before I join you, and you should start with that Biodun babe abeg, that fleshless scallywag hated you so much but tell me why she came into our room with cartarrh all over her face and very swollen eyes looking like the devils wife, she came with black ugly Bisola the weird girl with a blackness that makes her look like she was made with asphalt. I hate all of them, they didn't know you like I did and yet they come in here crying like they did.

I have not shed a tear in 2 days Bimbo, I do not know if that is good or bad, I do not know if it is anything at all, I do not even know what emotion I am engrossed in at the moment. Anger, sadness, guilt, shame, they're all rushing at me like a brawling wind, Bims help me please. Your mummy says all will be well, I must admit that she is really strong, I do not know where she draws her strength from, I love and hate that she's handling it quite well, nobody's meant to handle this well. She visits me at least twice a week, brings me food and cleans our room but I never let her fold your clothes, I still like to sleep on them, I still like to feel like I'm holding you when I fall asleep.

I will keep staring at this white wall till you come out and speak to me

Ore.

As I finished writing, I squeezed the once white paper now decorated with warm tears and blue ink and threw it with the pile of the other letters I had written everyday for the past 3 months. No I don't feel any relief, no I don't feel better but I know I will be inside this little cubicle writing this letters for as long as it takes.