
To: Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com

From: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com

Subject: Apologies!

Dear Officer Olisa,

I wouldn't want to start with a request but given the circumstances of our last conversation, I feel it's necessary. The last thing I'd want to do in this situation is spit in the eye of a good Samaritan. Anger was undeservingly transferred to you, and I ask that you please find it in your heart to forgive me.

I don't know where to start. Before we met, I had little hope anyone would listen to my situation. The officers that visited seemed to only be present out of necessity, without genuinely caring. Admittedly, I expected it. Please don't take this as a slight against your profession, but this is not a country full of diligent law enforcers. My short time back has taught me that. Nevertheless, it's reassuring to know that in this lifetime, I have met one. Maybe I should've hoped it'd be under better circumstances, but what good is a helping hand if one doesn't need help?

When you came afterwards, I was uncouth to say the least. Enduring hours of scrutiny from people sent to aid made me less receptive. That attitude might've not translated well. I just relocated here a few months ago. Two specifically. It hasn't been a great adjustment, so I apologize for the hostility you were met with. Staying here taught me to begin all interactions with aggressive caution, even when it's for your own good. I should've realized you were only compensating for your colleagues' omissions. I don't know if this is abusing the listening ear you've offered me, but I thought to write this to show my appreciation and relay my apology. My sister is on her way here, so I'll have company and hopefully a bit more sanity.

Thank you for your due diligence. And for leaving a way to contact you. I wouldn't want you to think I'm anything less than grateful.

My sincerest apologies,

V. Ajayi

To: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com
From: Olisa_Okoro@gmail.com

Subject: Water Under the Bridge

Dear Madam,

Please, do not feel the need to apologize. The pleasure is mine. I'm thrilled to be of assistance to you. Although I should also apologize. I was informed of the case while I was off duty. Without thinking to change back to my uniform, I made for your address. What happened to you is a bit personal to me.

I have sister, two older and one younger. They are my world. And I couldn't imagine them going through what you did. Unfortunately, at the beginning of this year, the unimaginable happened to our last born. She was rushed to the hospital. I witnessed firsthand how the experience took her. We were unable to catch the man. In a way, I hope my help in this case will suffice for my inability in that one. We all need to be our own keepers. You may not know me, but I hope with time you trust me. I promise you I will do everything in my power to assist you. That zeal brought me straight to your doorstep, failing to consider the delicate mental state you may have been in. Any hostility I was met with was understandable, warranted even.

I won't drag the situation more than it needs to be. You are forgiven. Words are words, they will not retract the assistance I offered you. Please, take time, heal. Whenever you are ready, I will be waiting to speak more in depth about the issue. I worry about reopening fresh wounds, but every last detail is crucial to catch the man who did this to you.

I hope the time with your sister adds some much-needed positivity to your life.

Take care and stay strong,

Officer Olisa

To: Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com

From: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com

Subject: Hi! My Life Lately

Dear Officer Olisa,

I haven't gone out much since the incident. Admittedly I wasn't one to want to before the incident. The social scene here confused me with the many unspoken rules. "You have to know everyone's gist to know the people you'll pretend not to know". "You mustn't entertain any man without a ring, he left it at home". "If you want to take a suitor seriously, reject him the first two advances, if he doesn't try the third time, he's not serious". All make no sense to me. Granted, I'm coming from a small county a train ride away from any real entertainment. It's called Kent. Mostly older citizens enjoying the rural plains. Maybe it's this way everywhere. Anyways, I was always comfortable in silence. It's odd to say interactions scare me, yet here I am speaking to a man I only met once!

I've also taken to baking. I haven't used my apartment oven much since I moved in. With a hectic work schedule, I couldn't find time to settle into new hobbies. But look at me now! Two pies away from winning The Great British Bake Off! (It's this show I always watched before I moved, quality television! Highly recommend)

At this point I must beg you not to feel pressured to entertain any of this. If you've even read this far. Writing these letters have come to be a way to articulate my feelings to myself. Most times I don't have the intention to send it, but for this one I thought you might want to be in the loop. I wanted you to know firsthand that I'm doing perfectly fine. With ordinary worries and concerns. I am much better.

I know only a weekend has passed, but if you'd like to discuss the details of the case I'm very open to it. I appreciate how you prioritized my mental state, but time is also of the essence. Plus, I'd rather get it done before any details begin to get blurry.

Hope to hear from you soon,

Best,

V. Ajayi

To: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com
From: Olisa_Okoro@gmail.com

Subject: RE: Hi! My Life Lately

Dear madam,

I am happy to hear you are doing well. It is also comforting to know you are in a better place now. I am not in the position to determine when it is appropriate to have this discussion, if you feel comfortable to address it, I am all ears.

Unfortunately, I am out of town today. My mother has been a bit ill, and I will be leaving shortly to visit her. I wish I could postpone it, but I am the only child. If you don't feel comfortable responding via email, I will let you know immediately I return. Our head office has been unable to make any leeway so far, but I hope there will be details in what you mention that can help push the investigation forward. Either way, please find below some essential questions to begin with. I think this will help narrow down the search.

1. What time did the incident take place?
2. When did you notice someone else was in your house? (can you distinguish him?)
3. Did he leave anything in the area? (please check for any forgotten items)

I hope to meet with you soon. In the meantime, please continue to make the most out of this situation. By god's grace, it will all work out smoothly.

Best regards,

Officer Olisa

To: Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com

From: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com

Subject: Everything

Dear Officer Olisa,

I'm wishing your mother a speedy recovery. Please, take your time. As my life comes apart, I forget other people are dealing with theirs. Get back to me whenever you're calm and settled.

In the meantime, I might as well respond through our emails. No better time like the present right? (Again, I insist, do not get back to me until you've finished your personal matters)

The incident took place around midnight. I usually keep myself occupied with a few chapters of whatever I find on my shelf before sleep eventually comes. It just became a daily habit. This time was different. I could hear everything in the silence of my midnight reading. I'm not one to be paranoid, so I pay little attention to foreign sounds around me. My first mistake. Adjusting to the constant noise was a big obstacle when I moved here. Nothing was ever quiet. Quiet here meant a generator or two, overhearing the neighbors (who shouted like they wanted to be overheard), even the honking of cars driving by.

I noticed the window seal to my bedroom was open. This I also summarized as my fault. I haven't gotten used to living on the ground floor yet. I closed it and the reading continues. Then I feel a heavy breathing on my neck. I thought it must be the wind. Before I could convince myself of that, two hands pin me to my bed. That was when the fright began. I struggled, but he hit me twice. That taught be it was wiser to be still. I prepared for death. I couldn't see him at all, nor hear him. Instead, I heard the unbuckling belt. Soon his member was out and on me. In the darkness he found his way and I began to cry.

He didn't leave anything that I know of. But if I'm being honest, I've only stayed in the guest room with my sister since the incident.

As I write this, I have a few mixed feelings. Maybe I'm not as far along with the recovery process as I thought. Apologies if this seems vague. I'll see if I'm in a better position to speak on things when you return.

Take care,

V. Ajayi

To: Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com

From: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com

Subject: Evidence

Dear Officer Olisa,

We found something.

I don't know if it relates to my assaulter, but we found something. My sister helped me enter the room to verify there was nothing left behind. To her surprise, in the crack between the bedframe and wall was a ring. It seemed too masculine for me to own (and I'm not one to have male visitors around in that way). Why would a ring be by my bedside? My sister wanted to take it in immediately, but I don't trust the "due diligence" of your colleagues. I have kept it in a safe drawer until you return. You can inspect it while I give you further details.

I still don't know how I feel about everything. I hope something as small as this will help in finding him.

That's all for now,

V. Ajayi

To: Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com

From: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com

Subject: Help

Last night someone came to the house. I know I sound crazy, my sister did well to tell me that. Believe me. Last night, someone was in my house. The same window was open, forcefully if I might add. I heard the noise at night. Fear wouldn't let me check, so I stayed in the guest room with my sister. The door was locked. I was as safe as I could be. But I heard it. Someone was here.

This morning I checked the room, and it didn't seem right. When you live alone you can tell when things have been moved. You can also tell when they've been moved back to look like they weren't touched. It was at this theory my sister dismissed me as crazy. I am not.

He was here. And I fear he may return, but what I fear most are the thought I have. The thoughts that welcome that return. The thoughts of what I might do.

To: Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com

From: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com

Subject: HELP

Dear Officer Olisa,

I cannot sleep. I know I said I was doing great, but that might have been a gross overestimation. Whatever I hid under that guise has resurfaced with yesterday's visit. I am scared. Please respond.

To: Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com

From: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com

Subject: ????

Why aren't you answering me??? Did I do something wrong? It's been a week!

To: Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com

From: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com

Subject: FYI

I am going to kill this man.

No, I'm not playing with my words. No, I am not overexaggerating. I'm leaving the window he crawled himself through open, and by it I sit – knife in hand, body bare.

Tonight, I tempt him.

Tonight, I kill him.

Leave your morality at the doorstep of this conversation. It isn't welcome. Were you there? My house was neat. The air inside it put the natural breeze outside to shame. The front gardens weren't magnificent, but they were mine. The flowers that fell to my shoulders in coarse stubbornness. The way it coiled and retracted at the touch of water. My windows weren't special, but they were mine. I was always told they were pretty; people said they were the type to stare into souls. Maybe it's the fact that he thought I saw his that made him steal mine. No. No justification.

He must die.

My architecture, the way my walls curved and held firm; it wasn't special, but it was mine. A structure I exhausted all my prepubescent wishes on. A structure I came to detest once the stares and catcalls soon followed in adulthood. It wasn't perfect, but it was mine. Now, I do not understand my own body. I am a homeless, driven out by the wickedness of one man.

I kicked my sister out. I do not need her. She claimed I was fixated on revenge rather than justice. Justice and revenge, Taiwo and Kehinde, who can tell them apart? If pain was never instigated will either exist? Who is she to tell me which is which? Did she become unrecognizable to her own self like I did? Did her perception of the world, once compassed by identify, lose all bearing? Mine did. Now I cannot run, everywhere has become nowhere. How do I not feel this? How do I deceive myself that I am okay. How do I resist the urge to peel my own skin? To take a thousand showers? I am dirty. He has stained me. He must die. If my sister does not see that, then I don't need her. And I don't need you.

In my time of need you left me. I will protect myself. And this will be my confession, the world will know I protected myself.

Consequences be damned.

To: Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com

From: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com

Subject: ...

Dear Officer Olisa,

To say I am ashamed is understating my current mood. I see why you didn't respond to the vile email I sent yesterday. Another online apology didn't seem right, so I thought I'd stop by the station to beg in person. I shouldn't have spoken to you like that.

I thought to carry the ring with me, but when I check I didn't find it. It was gone. My sister didn't respond to any of my pleas until this morning. After we reconciled, she told me she didn't take it. That was strange.

I would've put more effort into finding it, but I wanted to catch you in the morning (while the start of a new day had you in a good mood). Once I got there, I asked for you but the officer at the front desk was new.

She was kind enough to take me to another officer. I recognized him from the ineffective bunch that visited my house before you came. He wasn't thrilled to see me. I didn't want to prolong our interaction, so I asked for you.

He didn't know you.

No officer did. To everyone's knowledge, there wasn't an officer named Olisa at that station.

How can this be?

I doubt you will respond to this. Despite that, a part of me wants to give you the room to explain. The same room you gave me to issue my first apology.

I just need the truth.

Who are you?

To: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com
From: Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com

Subject: (NO SUBJECT)

I'm sorry.

To: Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com
From: ViviAjayi5@gmail.com

Subject: Sorry???

Dear Officer Olisa,

I don't understand, what does that mean?????

[Error: Unable to send. The email address -- Ol1sa_Okoro@gmail.com -- no longer exists.]