

ADESUWA'S STORY



Chapter 1: Has it been so long?

As I crossed the threshold into my thirties, the feeling that I was racing against an invisible clock grew more intense. Society's expectations weighed heavily on my shoulders, the endless questioning from well-meaning family members and friends echoed relentlessly in my mind. "When will you settle down, Adesuwa?" "Why aren't you married yet?" "Don't you want children?" It was as though my pursuits in academia and my aspirations as a fiction writer held no value if they didn't lead to marriage.

I had just returned from pursuing my master's degree in London, eager to focus on my career in fiction writing and research for my upcoming book. But it seemed my family

couldn't care less about my career ambitions if our conversations didn't revolve around my marital prospects or bringing a man home. The pressure to conform to traditional norms was relentless and I often found myself questioning my choices. I wanted it all – love, a successful career, and fulfillment – but I hadn't yet found my person but the question that kept plaguing my mind was... Is there really such a thing as 'my person,' or would I eventually settle for anyone?

"The driver has arrived," my mother's voice interrupted my restless thoughts, reminding me of our appointment with the designer for Sade's wedding this weekend. Sade, my favorite cousin, had always followed the rulebook, excelling academically by graduating with a first-class degree. Now, she was about to become a wife, sealing her legacy as everyone's favorite. While I was genuinely excited for Sade, I dreaded the upcoming wedding weekend. I already know it is going to be a painful reminder of how my life has diverged from the conventional path and I am not looking forward to that at all.

Later that night was Sade's bridal shower but I had no idea what I was about to experience. The shower was a beautiful reunion with friends and family that I hadn't seen for decades. I felt so out of touch but was genuinely excited to see everyone. We hugged and laughed, sharing stories of old and present times. But one thing I kept hearing was how everyone raved about their husbands and kids especially Elohor whose husband is the current minister of sports. She found a way to infuse her him into every and any conversation and you could see her eyes lit with pride as she raved about him. Few hours later, Adun and Ije showed up with heavy pregnancies, they apologized for their lateness and blamed it on pregnancy hormones. I tried to hide my surprise. Has it really been so long? Everyone seemed to have moved forward in life while I was still stuck as a single, ambitious woman. Had I chosen the wrong path? I couldn't help but wonder. If this bridal shower was such a stark reminder of how far behind I was in life, what would the actual wedding be like?

Chapter 2: Trying new things

Sunday after the wedding ceremony, I needed an escape from the noise and chatter of family members and friends at home, so I decided to visit the museum to clear my head. I stood alone on the terrace of the balcony, lost in thought, when a voice broke through my reverie. "Beautiful evening, isn't it?" Turning, I saw a man, with a weary yet kind expression. His name was Spencer, and as we talked, he revealed a story that resonated deeply with me. Spencer had lost his wife to a tragic accident, leaving him to raise their three young children on his own. He was a widower struggling to juggle his demanding job and the responsibilities of being a single father. I admired his dedication to his children.

As we continued to converse Spencer opened my eyes to opportunities that I could take advantage of not only to complete my research but also to get my book published. As he spoke, an idea flashed through my mind, an idea that would give me the much-needed peace and sanity to fully immerse myself in the next phase of my career.

With a mixture of courage and vulnerability, I decided to make Spencer an offer. It was the strangest thing I had ever had to do, but I knew that this could get me through the next one year of my life in Nigeria.

I proposed that for one year, I would help him raise his kids, taking on the role of a caregiver and a friend. In exchange, Spencer would offer me a part of his apartment in the highbrow area of Lagos. He didn't want to hire a maid to care for his children, and my presence would be a blessing.

But there was one more aspect to my proposal, I suggested that, to appease my family's constant inquiries about my relationship status, we should pretend to be married. Spencer would go as far as performing the marital rites, even though our union would be purely for show. In return, I would have a temporary escape from the relentless pressure to marry so I can focus on my book.

Spencer was taken aback by the audacity of my proposal, but he could see the sincerity in my eyes. He, too, had been grappling with the loneliness of being a widower and the

challenges of raising his children alone. While it was an unconventional arrangement, he couldn't deny that it had its merits.

After a moment of contemplation, Spencer extended his hand, sealing our unorthodox pact. We were now partners in a charade that would change our lives in unexpected ways. I had found an ally in my quest for independence, and Spencer had gained a caring presence to support him through the trials of single parenthood.

Chapter 3: New Experiences

My presence in Spencer's home brought about a transformation that no one could have predicted. As a writer, I have a unique gift for storytelling, and it was through these tales that I began to bridge the gap with Spencer's three children.

Jaden, the 11-year-old introvert, initially kept his distance from me. His mother's passing had left him emotionally scarred, and solitude had become his refuge. He regarded me with suspicion, wondering what my intentions were in their home. Yet, he held an unspoken hope that perhaps, in my own way, I could bring some semblance of happiness back into their lives. As long as I stayed off his path, he believed there could be peace.

Karen and Gigi, the younger daughters, were a different story altogether. Their attachment to their father was undeniable and his frequent absence due to work had them longing for the presence of a caring adult, and they initially protested when he prepared to leave for the office on my first day.

Undeterred by their initial defiance, I offered to help with their morning routine. I made them snacks and helped them get ready for school. When they got back, I asked about their day in school, and patiently listened to their stories. Slowly but steadily, I began to warm my way into their hearts. It was my genuine care and attention that started to break down the walls they had built.

As the days turned into weeks, my relationship with the children blossomed. My storytelling sessions became a daily ritual, and the children gathered around me with eager

anticipation, hanging onto my every word. Jaden, the quiet boy, began to open up, sharing his thoughts and even smiling from time to time with me. I could tell that as much as he tried to hide it, that I was becoming his new bestie. I enjoyed this new bond and so did he.

For Karen and Gigi, I became not just a caregiver but a source of comfort and love. They started to confide in me, seeking my embrace when they missed their father during his long working hours. Their defiant cries for him turned into warm hugs for me, who had become their favorite person.

Spencer watched in amazement as my presence transformed his home. The peace he had longed for, the assurance that his children were in loving hands, had become a reality beyond his wildest dreams. He couldn't believe how I had woven my way into the hearts of his kids, mending the cracks left by their mother's absence. And Spencer? well, he would give anything to keep this newfound peace and love intact or so I thought.

Chapter 4: Embracing Uncertainties

As the months passed, an undeniable chemistry had blossomed between us. My genuine affection for Spencer's children had made him even more irresistible in my eyes. I had never experienced a love quite like this before, and I was aware that something extraordinary had taken root in my heart.

Seven months had flown by since I entered their lives in Nigeria, and my time there was slowly coming to an end. This realization weighed heavily on me. I knew that leaving would mean Spencer returning to the pain and despair he had felt after losing his wife. I had glimpsed the depths of his loss, and I couldn't bear the thought of causing him more pain.

I cherished the happiness I had found with Spencer and his children and with a heart filled with both love and longing, I began finding ways to show Spencer how deeply I cared for him. I knew I had to make him fall in love with me, just as I had fallen for him. It was a risky endeavor, but one I was willing to take.

One evening, as we sat together on the terrace, the stars above casting a gentle glow, I decided to take the first step. With a hint of sadness in my voice, I confessed, "Spenser, there's something I need to tell you. I hope you can understand." Spenser turned to me, his expression curious, his eyes fixed on the shimmering night sky. "What is it, Adesuwa?"

I took a deep breath, my heart pounding in my chest. "I've been seeing someone," I began, my tone somber. "It's a new relationship, and I wasn't sure how to bring it up. I thought you should know." I watched as Spenser's face registered a mixture of surprise and confusion. I hoped this revelation would evoke a reaction that would give me some insight into his feelings. Spenser's eyes searched for mine, a hint of disappointment in his voice as he responded, "I see. I wish you all the happiness, Adesuwa. You deserve it."

His calm and understanding response struck a chord within me. I knew that this was just the beginning of a delicate dance, but I was determined to make Spenser realize that what we had was far more profound than any other relationship. As I looked at him in the moonlight, I silently vowed to do whatever it took to make Spenser fall deeply in love with me, to keep the light I had brought into their lives burning bright, and to ensure that our journey together would continue beyond the confines of pretense.

Chapter 5: My Happy/unhappy Ending

In the days that followed, I struggled to conceal my unrest. I haven't seen much of Spenser since I told him about the nonexistent relationship I made up in my head. An invisible rift had formed between Spenser and me and I knew I had to fix it. What was I thinking telling him I was in love with another man?

One cozy evening after a light drizzle, I knew I could no longer hide the truth so I came out of my room and sat on the terrace hoping I could catch him, As I gazed at the gathering clouds, Spenser approached me, "Adesuwa," he began, his voice shaky yet determined, Spenser took a deep breath but before he could say another word, I interrupted "I lied about being in a new relationship to make you jealous, to make you realize how much I

care about you. But it was a mistake, a terrible one. The truth is, I've been in love with you from the moment I walked into this house and into your lives."

My heart raced, my emotions a tempest within me. I couldn't believe that I just said that. I waited for Spencer to speak but his silence greeted my waiting ears. I turned away and looked towards the clouds waiting for this nightmare to end. "You lied to me?" Spencer's words hit me like a brick was thrown at me but before I could gather my thoughts to respond, he continued "The only reason I have spent the last few months hiding my feelings for you is that I wanted to be respectful of our pact, I didn't want you to think I was trying to take advantage of anything but Adesuwa... You're the best thing that happened to me in the last five years, the way you take care of my kids is an answer to the deepest prayers of heart. I fell in love with you from the first day you stepped into this home and everyday after then has been a struggle for me to hide what I feel for you. I know we met in the most unlikely circumstance but if you'd let me, I'll spend the rest of my life showing you the many ways I am committed to loving you. Adesuwa, please, give us a chance to write our beautiful love story together." Before I could gather my words to say yes, Spencer moved towards me and planted a kiss on my forehead and I felt my anxiety wash away like I was under a spring of water. Everything I remember from then on was bliss and peace.

A soft knock on the door startled me.

"Adesuwa, are you okay in there?" My mother's voice broke through the most blissful dream I've ever had. I didn't respond because I hoped for a second that I was still living in the reality of my dreams. I opened my eyes slowly and it rested on the portrait of my framed NYSC picture lying at the corner of my room. The noise from the women cooking in the compound jolted me back to reality. "Adesuwa, when will you start getting ready? The makeup artist has been waiting" my mother's voice came piercing again. Disoriented, I dragged myself out of my bed, slowly creeping back into reality. Tears welled in my eyes at the realization that I was actually back to facing this dreadful day and that the man and life that offered me an escape existed in a realm that I couldn't grasp. "I'm here, Mom," I called

back, my voice heavy with the remnants of emotions from the dream. I went about the day lost in my temporary but memorable dream life. I count help but ask myself these questions: "Does Spencer exist? Where can I find him?"