

A DIADEM

In the early part of the evening in a small town in Osun called Ejigbo, the men were playing Ayo with a traditional gourd filled with palm wine by their side. The children in the compound were in different groups - some were running around, some were playing football, and others were assisting their mothers. The women were also busy making dinner for their children and husbands.

Ogunniyi, popularly known as Doki, emerged from his house with a plate of kolanut and a gourd in his hands, wanting to enjoy the evening breeze.

Immediately, the children ran to him, clapping, dancing, and raising dust with their feet, while chanting, "Doki, tell us a story, tell us a story, tell us a story."

Doki replied, "Calm down," with a smirk on his face.

Ogunniyi, well-known for his stories, sat down and instructed the children to settle down. They formed a circle around him. He was a tall and sturdy man in his forties, known as an old soul who cherished culture and loved to preserve it in his own way. He held a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Genealogy. Upon first sight, he had a receding hairline that seemed to dance into the ADs (After Death). When he smiled, his eyes squinted, revealing his protruding incisors, which came across as both funny and captivating. Rumor had it that he was handsome and an overall lovely man to those who encountered him.

Ogunniyi picked up his kola nut, broke it in half, ate one half, and then called Akanji, his favorite among the children in the compound. Akanji came and knelt down beside Doki, saying, "Good evening, Doki." Doki replied, "Get me a calabash from the backyard, rinse it before coming, o." Akanji arrived with the calabash, and Doki poured his palm wine into the calabash, using it to rinse his mouth.

Doki cleared his throat and said, "Our people always say, It is impossible to collude in private without the problem finally resulting in a public debate".

Asake, the baby of the compound, frowned slightly and said, "Doki has started with his proverb again."

He looked around and noticed the children's confused faces. He laughed heartily, exposing his protruding teeth, and said, "Let me break it down for you children with a story."

He stopped, took a sip from the calabash in his hand, and then continued, "What I am about to tell you, keep in your left hand, don't use it to eat swallow, o?" while pointing at Akanji and Asake. Akanji laughed; he had this funny laughter that made the children laugh even harder.

Doki continued, saying, "Everything done in secret is eventually revealed. For some people, it takes years, some decades, and for some, it may not happen even in their lifetime."

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Oguntola Ariyibi was born into a family of eight. His father was a warrior, and his family hailed from a lineage of warriors. It was believed that his father was one of the warriors who fought fearlessly in the Ife/Modakeke war, while his mother was a prominent aso-ofi (woven fabrics) trader, properly known as Iya Meto. She gave birth to six children—four girls and two boys. Ogunbunmi was the firstborn child of the family. She studied at the prestigious University of Ile-Ife (OAU) and became a teacher. She later got married to an engineer and gave birth to four children—three boys and one girl. She was known for inheriting her mother's sternness. Ogunyemisi was the second-born; she went to and studied nursing at the University of Ilorin. She was the spitting image of her father and married a banker,

giving birth to three girls. Ogunfunke could be considered a rebel among the girls. After completing her form 5 in Modakeke Grammar School, she didn't further her education to the university. Instead, she formed her own band, which was quite successful in the whole of Osogbo. Later, she married a trader and gave birth to five children—two boys and three girls, with one stillbirth. Modupelowoogun was the bookworm and the hothead of the family. She studied medicine at the University of Ibadan and practiced abroad. Word on the street was that she married a white lawyer who left her for a younger lady due to her fertility issues. Ogundeji, the first boy child of the family and known for his calm demeanor at a very young age, had a lot of responsibilities on his shoulders. Because of this, he matured faster than his age and studied accounting at the University of Ile-Ife, like Ogunbunmi.

Oguntola, the baby of the family, was tall and light-skinned unlike his siblings. He had a head full of hair and a captivating smile that showcased his dimples. He drew people closer to him with his cheerful demeanor, exceptionally funny and made his environment lively. He was very intelligent, earning him a scholarship to study sociology at the University of Ibadan (UI).

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In his first semester, he gained popularity due to his intelligence and good looks. It wasn't easy to ignore his presence in the department, and he became the course representative without any hassle. Akinyemi was his roommate and course mate.

By his third year in the university, Oguntola attracted a lot of people to him and was also the favorite of lecturers across several departments in his faculty. He attracted both negative and positive attention. Initially, he was popularly known for his brain, but over time, attention shifted from that to his promiscuous activities on

campus, making him the center of negative attention. His preference was women who today are referred to as "slim thick"—women with a smaller upper body and a bigger lower body, tall, caramel-skinned, and beautiful. These were the specific kind of women Oguntola liked, and how he always got them should be studied.

In his final year, he had his eyes on a particular girl called Nifemi, who checked all the boxes of his requirements. Then he started pursuing her, sent her friends to persuade her, and sent gifts to her. Still, she refused to give him any audience.

One evening, as the sun was starting to set, Oguntola was coming back from the food joint and headed towards his hostel. He came across Nifemi being harassed by a group of boys. He jumped right into the scene, threw a few fists which scared the boys away, and escorted her to her hostel, bidding her goodnight. The next day, Nifemi came to his lecture room and waited for him, looking for him amongst the crowd. When she saw him, she waved him over, he excused himself from the people walking with him, walked towards her, hugged her, and said, “The one you came to see me today, after chasing you after all this while, hope we are safe.” He laughed, and his dimples were ever so beautiful as he motioned for her to keep walking. She looked at him and smiled, saying, “No, I came to thank you for helping me out yesterday. I thought you were going to walk away and ignore me due to the way I treated you so badly in the past.” He laughed, held his chest in an exaggerated way to show surprise, and said, “I am so shocked you knew the way you treated me was so bad. But anyway, you are welcome. I just helped you just like the way I will help anyone in that situation. It was no big deal.” She just smiled and continued walking. Then Oguntola said, “Are you going for lunch, or do you have another class?” She replied, “I am going for lunch, and then I will be going to the library. You are welcome to join me if you like.” He replied, “Why

would I refuse such a wonderful offer?” They laughed and headed towards the food joint.

One particular evening, when Oguntola came back from lectures, his roommate Akinyemi called him and said, “Tola, please I want to talk to you, and it is quite urgent.” Oguntola looked at him, removed his shoes, and sat down on the bed and said, “What is it? Hurry up and talk because I am hungry and tired.” Akin cleared his throat and said, “I heard a rumor about you and just wanted to confirm. I heard you sleep around with different girls under the guise of teaching them materials.” Oguntola looked at him, with irritation in his eyes and hissed. He stood up, took off his shirt, and said, “So, is that the reason why you wasted my time? And if it is true, what do you want to do? Please just mind your business. Whatever I do with my life is none of your business.” He hissed and left his room. Akinyemi was surprised at Oguntola’s reaction. He shook his head, shrugged, and continued reading.

After that, Oguntola and Nifemi could be seen together almost all the time. Many people speculated that they were dating, and they never denied the rumors. So, many people believed the rumors. Oguntola, on the other hand, kept on persuading Nifemi to sleep with him, telling her he needed to confirm her love for him by allowing him to sleep with her, and he would never pressure her again.

After their final project, Nifemi went to Oguntola’s hostel. She got to his room, knocked, and waited for a response. Oguntola opened the door, and when he saw her, he told her to come in and beckoned for her to sit on the bed. He served her a cup of water and sat beside her. Then she cleared her throat and said, “Tola, I have been thinking of what you said all this while, and I have decided to accept it.”

Oguntola covered his mouth in surprise and was about to talk when she interrupted him. She continued, “You know, Tola, all these rumors about you sleeping around

made me very scared, but I decided to trust you. So please don't let me down." He responded by saying, "Nifemi, I will never let you down. You know I really love you, and I really wanted us to move forward in our relationship and to prove our love for each other." Then he hugged her, and Nifemi gave in.

After that day, Oguntola began to avoid Nifemi. Anytime she tried looking for him, he was never around; he avoided her for a month. One particular Tuesday, Nifemi, after her classes, went to wait for Oguntola at the front of his lecture room. When they were done, she was looking for him amongst the crowd. When she saw him, she tried walking towards him. When she overheard his conversation with his friends, one of them said, "Tola, we don't see you with that your babe again. What happened? Did you guys fight?" He laughed and said, "No, fight ke. I have dumped her; she was carrying shoulder for me, and we have seen each other finish (see finish), so what else do I need from her?" He continued laughing, and his friends joined him in laughter. One of them commented, "Tola, Tola, sharp guy, you have cleared her so quickly like that, I trust you." They continued walking towards the food joint. Nifemi was in shock as she heard all what they said and went ahead to confront him. She tapped his shoulder; he was surprised as he was not expecting to see her. She said, "Oguntola, I am not all that surprised about what you said because I heard everything. I should not have expected much from you from the very beginning, but I just want to tell you, you are going to regret it sooner and later." She hissed and left them, as they stood there speechless.

One early morning, Oguntola was heading back to the hostel from his night reading session in preparation for his final exams when he was surrounded by three hefty men. Before he could react, he was given a resounding slap that left him dazed for a few seconds. By the time he collected himself, he was bundled up and carried away. He was woken up with very cold water, and when he looked around,

he noticed he was surrounded by a group of men—hefty, mean-looking, and rough around the edges. A man came out of a room, walked towards Oguntola, and gave him another uplifting slap, which brought him back to reality. This man’s name was Timilehin, and he was one of the leaders of a very popular cult in the university, and also Nifemi’s brother. He looked at Oguntola and spoke, “You have the audacity to sleep with my sister and dump her? If you have been trying it with other girls, you should not have reached her side. She was on her own before you started pursuing her. So, it is either you join us or you lose your life here.”

Oguntola started crying, rolling on the floor, pleading with them, saying, “Please forgive me, I will never go near her. Just this last chance, I won’t go near any woman again in my life.” He wept and continuously pleaded with them. They all laughed as they started brandishing different weapons. As they were about to start beating him, another man came in, looked at Oguntola, and beckoned Timilehin to follow him to another room. He told him, “Boss, please, I know you are angry with the guy. What he did to your sister was good, but this guy has helped me plenty times when we prepare for exams. I will be an ingrate if I don’t help him. You could beat him a little, but please, let’s let this guy go. He is a good person, but he offended the wrong person, please boss.” Timilehin looked at him, thought for a while, and said, “No problem.” He left the room and gave a signal, and they let him go. Oguntola thanked them and ran out of the building.

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After Oguntola graduated from the higher institution, he got a successful job and lived a fairly comfortable life, but his major flaw in life was that he never stopped being promiscuous, carrying different women at his place of work, and squandering money and gifts on them. He never got married and kept philandering about. His brother introduced him to an investment which made him sell his

property and everything he had, promising him that he would get double of his investment a month later. Ogundeji took all the money and absconded with it abroad. It took a while for Oguntola to realize he had been duped by his brother. This situation turned Oguntola into a walking corpse with several illnesses, from high blood pressure to stroke and diabetes. He couldn't afford basic amenities and later took to the streets to beg for alms. Out of frustration, he took his own life.

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During his funeral, it was found out that he had fathered more than thirteen children. Modupelowoogun called Ogundeji explaining the circumstances surrounding Oguntola's death, and it was then that Ogundeji explained that Oguntola had slept with his wife, and his wife had tried to pin the pregnancy on him.

Doki stopped, cleared his throat, sipped from his palm wine, and said, "You see, my father had a glorious destiny, but his promiscuity and not knowing when to stop hindered and blocked his glorious destiny from coming to life. He was meant to be successful until the end of his life, but he used his own hands to destroy his own life." He stopped, looked around, and noticed the children were still paying full attention. He continued, "So, my children, a diadem or not?".