

The Third Person



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KAIRA

To the public eye, Elijah and I had the perfect marriage. Our wedding or weddings were the talk of the town. We had the white in New York, and the traditional in Nigeria. The wedding stayed on the US and Nigeria trend table for days. Word on the streets was, we were the best interracial couple. It was a lot for me, but that was the price I had to pay, for marrying a Peterson.

The Nigerian wedding was more my mother's than mine. All I had to do was attend. It was cute seeing Elijah in the famous *Isi agu*. I still remember the little children pointing at him, and screaming *onye-ocha*, and how his cheeks immediately went red. The whole event made him uneasy—maybe a little scared even. He didn't say, but I could tell by how tightly he held on to me, and how sweaty his palms were.

The times I had to go for a change of clothes as the Igbo custom demands, he shot me a look that said “please, don't leave me.” The online in-laws, had seen this look in one of the pictures posted online and said he had puppy eyes. I

didn't blame them. If they saw him up close, they'd have known that it was different. He was really frightened, and I had never seen him like that before.

The white wedding was where the magic was for me. I cried with reckless abandon. Elijah's gestures were so grand. He had personally dived to get the pearls I wore on that day. The video was played on the big screens at the wedding reception. Ladies were online, telling men to jot *finz* down. "It's a Peterson thing. We either go big, or we go home!" was the response he gave to me when I asked why he didn't get the pearls from a regular store. I found it bizarre that he dived, but cute that my fellow women saw my man as the standard. There was no telling that I had won in this patriarchal world.

The *Vera Wang* made my dress. She posted on her instagram, and even tagged me. Different dignitaries, courtesy of the Petersons, were present at the wedding. The wedding's attendance was the society's way of sieving true celebrities from the wannabes. It was truly one for the books.

I met Elijah in my sophomore year of college. He was one of the rich kids who had no alliance with humility. He had money, and he'd show it off at any given opportunity. We had turned up late to the same class, and became assignment partners for that course. It was love at first smell for me. From the way he smelled, I knew it wouldn't be so hard falling in love with him. Beneath all that arrogance was the softest man I had ever met.

He teased me all through that class about my full name: *Chikairanyelu*. He had insisted that I told him, after giving me a crash course on the need to own culture, after finding out I was Nigerian. He struggled so hard to pronounce it. Each attempt was a disaster. He eventually settled for Kaira like I had initially suggested. "So much for being diverse, huh?" I said to him. He smiled and said, "I am going to marry you one day!"

We were so different. My family was well acquainted with wealth, but my immigrant Nigerian parents never really cut ties with their "home country," as they often called it. They could barely enjoy their wealth, due to the numerous calls from relatives in Nigeria, complaining about one thing after another. My brother and I were in touch with our

roots, and as such, valued money. This was not the case for Elijah.

He had been born into what my brother, Oke, had described as “bastard money.” One he aspired to have, someday. There were rumors that Elijah’s father, Bill Peterson was into some kind of fraud scheme. Some even went ahead as accusing him of sexual abuse. He had several cases in court, but none had ever stuck, unable to convict him of any crime. “Na who dem catch be thief; no money is really clean,” my brother, Oke, had told me when I revealed that I was a bit skeptical about marrying into a family like that.

The first year of marriage wasn’t so different from the years we spent together in school. The only new development was we were living together, and now having sex. Not as frequently as I had hoped. Elijah was always busy, but he covered for it, with anything the Peterson’s money could buy, including sex toys. I had made a promise to God, to wait till marriage before having sex. The highest Elijah and I did before marriage, was to hold hands, hug and kiss. I feared that it was a bother for him, but I had heard his guys tease him, about *getting some* behind my back, and his response was “as if.” I was really blessed to

have him. I would later warn him to be careful of such friends, as I had a bad feeling about them.

I like to describe our second year of marriage as the track that led to our multiple train wrecks. It had started with Elijah being totally absent in our home. At first, I thought it was work, but the few times I showed up at his office to surprise him, he was never there. His assistant always said he left early, but her eyes told me a different story. She looked at me pitifully. I married the Elijah Peterson, so why on earth did she pity me?

“I think he’s cheating on me babes,” I had said to my best friend, Kadajah, over one of our Sunday lunches. She laughed for a good minute before saying, “Elijah? Cheat on you? Nah! He doesn’t have the balls for that. Dude literally worships the ground you walk on. Fuck the assistant.” “Yeah, screw her,” I responded. I said that, but my mind asked “what if?” Cheating is my number one dealbreaker. Elijah knew this.

I found hotel receipts the following week. I was picking up clothes from our laundry bag, when the papers fell from the pile I was carrying. I was going to dispose of them

immediately, but I had a second thought to check, so I did. I'm glad I did. They were billed to *Alex*. I didn't know any *Alex*, so I figured they were *Elijah's*. I asked him when he got back that evening.

“Did Larissa call in sick? Why were you doing the laundry babe?” Our laundry woman's name is *Theresa*, so I knew he was only being avoidant.

“Wrong answer. *Elijah*, why do you have a hotel receipt billed to an *Alex*?”

“Oh! That. Let me see?” I gave him the papers. He stared at them shortly and said, “I think this belongs to *Stacy's* boyfriend. I really don't know how it got into this house. She probably dropped them off the last time she was here. You know how *Stacy* can be. I'll give her a call, or you could, you know?” That was his way of saying he had nothing to hide.

I called *Stacy* the next morning, and she confirmed his story. “*Alex* is not my boyfriend though, just some guy I was fucking.” Typical *Stacy*. She and *Elijah* had been best friends since preschool. Everyone thought they would end

up together, but Stacy wasn't one to settle. "I'm like a car's engine, always due for an oil change," she'd always say when asked the reason for having a new man every other week.

Three months after the receipt incident, my gynecologist, Ify, who's also my friend, asked to see me after my yearly check up. She asked that we talk over lunch. It was strange, but I thought she wanted to catch up. We were due for a hangout anyway, so I went.

"Are you and Elijah fine?" Ify asked almost immediately I sat at the table. She was still wearing her medical coat. It was code for, "I need to get back to saving the world, so let's get done with this, as soon as possible."

"What happened to hi, or hello? Anyway, Yes, we are fine. Why the question?"

"I don't know if it's in my place to ask, but do you guys have an open marriage?"

"What's with all these questions? Did one of the reporters put you up to this? Because—"

“Kaira, you have Gonorrhoea,” Ify interrupted me.

I became silent.

“I’m as shocked as you are, Kay. For the first time, I doubted my lab scientist when I got your results. I asked him to retest so—”

“Thank you, Ify,” I interrupted. “I’ll come by the hospital tomorrow and start treatment, but I have to go now. Also, I’ll need you to keep this between us. Okay?”

“I understand,” she said.

I sat in my car and cried my eyes out for about thirty minutes before leaving the restaurant’s parking lot. I could barely drive. I kept parking to wipe my teary eyes from blurring my vision. Ify’s words kept playing in my head. Gonorrhoea wasn’t some airborne disease that people caught. Elijah was really cheating, and he was dumb enough to give me a souvenir. I wanted to go home, but I found myself driving to my husband’s office.

It was almost closing hours when I arrived. Just as I entered the elevator, I caught a glimpse of my husband. He was standing with a woman. She had her hands wrapped around him. He seemed to be enjoying what ever that was. I tried to step out, but the elevator door closed. It was a transparent elevator, so I was still able to see them walk out the building. It had to be her. I got out of the elevator and raced down the stairs. I hoped I'd catch up to them, but they were gone when I got outside.

I pulled out my phone and called Kadajah. I was losing my mind, I needed a familiar voice to calm me down. I was walking on the streets, crying and checking every corner for my husband, and this woman I believed he was sleeping with. Kadajah finally picked after many rings.

“Hey boo, how—” she said

“You were wrong! He’s cheating, I saw him with her. They gave me fucking gonorrhoea.” I interrupted.

Those were the last words I said before getting hit by a car. I had been walking on the main road, and didn’t even

realize it. Loving this species called men, would do that to you.

I sat across my soon to be ex-husband, Elijah. He had been smiling and laughing since the start of dinner and it irked me so bad. This was supposed to be a dinner to celebrate my life. It was one month after my three weeks coma.

Elijah had invited very close friends. *Alex* was in attendance too. Stacy had kept this one longer than the rest, and he seemed to be getting along with everyone. He sang Elijah's praises. Apparently, he, Elijah, wasn't himself all the time I was away. He took time off from work to take care of me.

He was no hero to me. He was the reason I had the accident in the first place, but Elijah didn't know this, so he chuckled at Alex's remarks. Only Kadajah knew what had really happened. She was the only one that knew the plans I had to leave him too.

"I remember, and I want a divorce." I blurted out. Those words came out faster than my head could really process it. I was tired of all the stupid jokes flying around.

“Who wants more sauce?” Kadijah, my best friend said in a bid to change subject. It was a little too late for that. Everyone was already looking towards me

“Chikairanyelu, not here, please,” Kadijah said.

“Why not?” I responded.

“Babe, is this some kind of pr-pr-prank? Is it the meds? Do you need to lie down?” Elijah responded, with a bit of a stutter. He did that when he was scared.

“I know you have been having an affair. I saw you on the day I had the accident. It is why I had the accident. Who is she?” I paused. Short enough to swallow the saliva that had now formed in my mouth, but not long enough for him to answer. “You know, it was all woozy at first, but it’s all coming back to me. I know what I saw, and I’m sure as hell not blind, so, who the hell is she Elijah?”

ELIJAH

I had spent days, watching my wife lay on the hospital bed without moving any part of her body. More than anything, I wished that she would cup my face with her tiny fingers. The doctors had assured me that she'd eventually wake up as her case was just a slight trauma to the head. She'd lose part of her memory, but they'd come back with time. "You have nothing to worry about Eli, Chikairanyelu is getting the best care," Doctor Chuka said to me. He's been the family doctor since I was nine, so I knew I could trust his words. Also, Nigerians looked out for their own in the states.

In those moments of watching her, I loathed the times I had stepped out of our marriage. Marrying Kaira is the best thing that ever happened to me. She gave me a kind of peace I didn't know that I needed. I was at the verge of losing her, and it took seeing her like that to realize how much I loved her.

My family had kicked against marrying her initially. It had nothing to do with who Kaira was, but the fact that we'd

have to travel over 8000 kilometers for a wedding. The whole thing scared me as well, but I'd do anything to prove my love for this woman. I even went as far as paying a pearl diver to get the pearls she wore on our wedding. I took videos to make it seem like I did, but that was just to add effect to the whole thing. I was just glad that it made her smile in the end.

She did everything right, but I still cheated. I didn't have a choice. She couldn't give me the type of sex that I was used to. Sex as I knew it, thanks to my dad, was between a man and a man. The rumours about the man were true. "I'm just a man that likes what I like. Now, go wash up," was what he said to me, every night he did it with me. It was painful at first, but I got over the pain eventually.

I don't who she must have seen me with, but Kaira is the only woman I've ever been with sexually. I didn't enjoy the sex, but she made me feel normal. I didn't have the connection I had with her with any other man. I only wanted them for the sex.

Stacy was the only one who knew I was the way I was. She had walked in on me going down on one of the boys back

in high school. I expected her to scream or yell on us, but she closed the door and said, “I’ll keep watch,” while holding her thumb out to us. We never spoke about it since then. Well, not until I sent her a text that night to vouch for me if Kaira called.

“Who the fuck is she Elijah?” Kaira asked again. I snapped back to reality.

Affair? Yes. Woman? No.

There is a third person, but he’s not a woman.

“Kaira, Elijah really loves you.” Alex said from across the table.

“Thanks babe—sorry, Alex” I responded.

I looked at Kaira, I didn’t know if she caught it or not.

The End!