

Hello Uzundu,

I got your message last week and I apologise for not replying immediately. I had wanted to but I spoke to Chike about it first as I tend to do these days about any and everything and he advised I sleep on it for a while before responding. Obviously, I took his advice.

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Uzo, for the first few months after you left, all I could feel was rage. I couldn't shake this anger that manifested in different forms: tears I cried until I could no longer feel my face, screams at my driver Nnodi for not adding 'Ma' when he responded to me, dying my hair red, then locing it, then cutting it and dying it purple, asking my mother "o gbasara gi?, is it your business?" when she asked about my hair. I hadn't expected that I would come so undone because you ghosted me. That connection we had which felt almost eerie every time you would call me the second I got off a flight or when we would Facetime at work and realise we were both wearing the same colour. I expected this connection would have led you to at least, warn me or perhaps my spirit would have given me a sign. Those didn't happen. Nothing prepared me for the way you left, left me feeling naked.

One minute we were on that boat from Ikorodu back to Ajah that you insisted we took because you wanted to fix "my problem" of never being on a boat before and the next, I can no longer text you the dream I had last night where I was swimming in the waters behind Twin waters and a fish told me her name was Mmirimma. Who do you expect I tell these dreams now? Who else will listen to my dreams and not think I'm possessed?

Chike got promoted at work last month and we had a night out to celebrate. The night had been going so well, we were in the company of his friends, some of mine and his colleagues. We were at our second club for the night, dancing when the DJ played Simi's Joromi and suddenly it was as though someone punched me in the chest. At first I struggled to breathe and as I tried walking over to our seat to catch my breath, my vision became blurry and then tears. Chike followed me and grabbed me just as I sank into the seat. Our friends walked up to us to check what was wrong. He told them I wasn't feeling well and that we needed to leave but that I would be fine. He helped me to the car and as we got in, I had to tell a man I had confessed my love to the week before that I had started crying in the middle of a dance with him because a song my ex-boyfriend and I sang at our first karaoke together came on. He understood because he's a decent human being but it was such a pool of emotions for me; anger, pain, embarrassment, pity. Uzundu, I was distraught and I still am.

My secret Santa at work got me "The Kite runner". I cried at my desk. Whoever my secret Santa was, must have been a little confused. It was just a book but it was also the last book we spoke about reading. I put it on the "Chioma's wishlist" folder on your laptop and you would have bought me the book for my birthday. I haven't been able to open it because I'm afraid I'd see you on its pages.

I was on an ATM queue the other day and suddenly I smelled 'Gucci Guilty' and just like that, my day was ruined.

I truly thought by now, I would no longer hold back a tear or two when I think of you. 'Time heals all wounds' has started to feel like a lie. Or maybe I just need more time.

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That morning when I heard footsteps coming up my stairs and looked out the parlour window to see who it was and saw you, my heart should have stopped but it didn't. You were dead. I saw your body lowered into the earth at your funeral. I peeped and saw you drop the letter, you looked up, our eyes met and you smiled. I ran to open the door and you had gone. I picked up the brown envelope.

*Nneoma, I won't say don't freak out because I know you won't. This bold belief in a connection between us that transcends what we understand is the thing that I now love the most about you. I can't lie, it was a little weird when I was alive but now that I'm here, you weren't wrong. I'm so amazed by your ability to feel life as deeply as life should be felt, even more.*

*Nneoma, I'm so sorry that you feel how you feel because I died. I'm so sorry that it happened too quickly and you didn't get any kind of closure or warning. That morning as the force from the truck that hit my car threw me out of the driver's seat and I landed in the middle of the road: on the cold tar with blood almost gluing my eyes shut, your name was all I struggled to speak. I'm so sorry, my love.*

*I'm only allowed to write one letter from this side ever and I've been waiting for the perfect moment to write you. When I saw how Chike handled the Joromi incident, I knew it was time and that you had found an even more beautiful soul to further share your amazing love with. I won't go into details of how dying feels and how things are here, even though I know you'd want to hear all about that. The element of surprise makes it all the more magical. Oh! would you be surprised, my love; so surprised, but a good kind. Believe everyone that has told you "he's in a better place". I truly am. Your brother Ngozi is here too. We're happy.*

*Please write back, Nne. I'll get it. Once you start writing your reply, you'll know where to drop it and I promise I'll get it. I love you Nne. Forever.*

*Uzondu gi.*

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I'm not sure how you thought I would feel after reading this letter but I want you to know that it's not good or healed or relieved.

I'm going to drive to Chike's house to tell him I need space. Well, there goes the "even more beautiful soul to further share my amazing love with".

If anything, your letter has helped me realise I need more time to dig deep into my heart and fully break it; fully allow myself feel all the pain that your death left me and after I'm done, slowly start healing. I also don't get why the bridge at Sandfill bus stop is where I'm supposed to drop this letter but then again; I received a letter from my dead boyfriend and I'm now writing him one back so I guess the bridge at Sandfill bus stop should be the least of my worries.

I know you said you're only ever allowed one letter but if by some miracle or mistake, you're allowed another, don't write me please. I can't do this level of strange more than once in a lifetime. I love you, Nna.

Goodbye Uzondu.

Forever this time.