

The marks humans leave are too often scars

I was only 10 when I lost him; the incidence is still so vivid. I knew my father was not the best man to have ever lived but how dare them take him away from us.

Is it my mother who hawks plantain for a living that would take care of Sheri and I. I curse the day that the SARS officer set foot in our home and shot my father dead leaving him to die in a pool of his own blood, "ahh! Ibanuje nla."

Simbi's journey began with the death of her beloved father, a man whose laughter was as warm as the summer sun. He left this world all too soon, leaving behind a void that could never be filled. Her mother Ronke had grown so cold forgetting she has children to raise, forgetting that there are two children that need all the love they can get but Ronke was too star struck by the death of her husband, the love in between them could move mountains and light up a room. "Romy baby" as he would call her and she would squibble and smile like a child but all that has gone since the death of her beloved.

She now became a woman trapped in her own grief. She withdrew into herself, as if she were lost in a dark forest with no way out. Every morning, when Simbi left for school, she would find her mother huddled in a corner of their living room, murmuring as if conversing with phantoms. It was a haunting sight, and it weighed heavily on Simbi's fragile heart. Her grades were plummeting like a stone tossed into a deep abyss. Simbi's mind was tormented by the memories of her father's funeral, and her heart was heavy with guilt for not being able to save him.

As Simbi hurried to catch the bus, she spotted a car racing recklessly by. In an instant, a wave of muddy water splashed over her, leaving her drenched and dishevelled. She couldn't help but lament, "Oh God, am I destined for constant misfortune? First, my father's passing, and now this estrangement from my mother. Is this some cruel fate I'm trapped in? Kilode!"

Noticing a sheltered spot beneath a mango tree, she decided to take a moment's respite. "No more school for me today," she concluded with a heavy sigh. "Life doesn't seem to hold much promise anyway."

Simbi's closest friends were Simi and Bimbo. They watched helplessly as their friend's world crumbled. Simbi's once-bright eyes grew dim, and her laughter, like a fading echo, became a rarity.

One gloomy evening, as the rain tapped against the windowpane, Simi and Bimbo hastily disembarked from the danfo bus, their eyes locking onto Simbi, who sat beneath the tree lost in thought. Bimbo couldn't help but exclaim, "Ah, isn't that Simbi? Simbi, you seem lost. Is that why you missed school today?"

Simbi let out a deep sigh, replying, "I think I'm done, guys, just done."

Simi was puzzled, asking, "Done? Done with what?"

Bimbo, trying to lift her friend's spirits, chimed in, "Hey, you're not done. I've got something that might help. There's a party later, and I'm invited. You can come as my plus one. It'll be a good distraction. It's at Crawshawn Homes, let's go home and get ready."

Once they arrived home, Simbi found her mother still huddled in the same corner where she left her in morning. She approached her gently, saying, "Ma mi, what's wrong? We are all hurting right now. We need to support each other."

Her mother replied with a hint of bitterness, "Simbi, just let me be. I'll handle things my way."

Simbi sighed and, on her way out of the room, glanced at her sister's room, smiling faintly. She muttered softly, "We'll find a way out of this someday."

As Simbi approached Crawshaw Homes, she couldn't help but notice the bustling crowd that had gathered there. The thumping music reverberated through the air, its volume so intense that it threatened to rupture one's eardrums. Amid this sensory overload, Simbi found herself muttering under her breath, "What is this place?"

Suddenly, her friend Bimbo appeared by her side, exclaiming, "Hey babe, I didn't think you would come! Let me introduce you to everyone." Simbi, though initially taken aback by the chaos around her, felt a sense of comfort in Bimbo's presence and decided to go along with the introductions.

But then, out of nowhere, a deafening gunshot shattered the frenetic atmosphere. Panic erupted instantaneously, and the once-crowded space turned into a sea of terrified screams and frantic movements. Amidst the chaos that ensued Simbi ran towards the exit, desperately searching for her best friends.

Reaching the exit, Simbi realized with a sinking feeling that she had been left alone in the turmoil. The realization struck her like a sudden gust of cold wind, leaving her isolated in the midst of the pandemonium.

"My feet are beginning to hurt." She said

Wearing these heels was a bad idea but on the other hand I did not think that I would be running for my life and most importantly be abandoned by someone I thought I could trust with my life. I should take these heels off but the thought of running on the dirty streets without shoes does not sit right with me.

Simbi looks frantically from left to right in desperate search for a hiding spot, she sees a shed she thinks to herself, "the shed is in a very poor state but I can't think of that right now."

She quickly prys the doors open and hide inside, locking the door behind her. She sits down and hugs her knees to her chest, trying to make herself seem smaller and less noticeable. The floor of the shed is wet and reeks of the smell of moss and dampness.

I should be grateful that I at least have a place to hide but I can't help but notice how disgusting my hiding place is. I thank God it is dark, so I do not have to see how bad it looks.

"How did I get here?" she says as she begins to sob quietly.

Who knew that a day that began so normally could end up so terribly?

Suddenly, an insistent knock echoed through the door, jolting her from her thoughts. The sound was so jarring, but there was something oddly familiar about the voice on the other

side. A nagging hope flickered within her praying it wasn't those troublesome girls, Bimbo and Simi, who abandoned her at the party.

With cautious anticipation, she approached the door and swung it open. There, standing before me, was Femi—the boy who had harbored a crush on me since our junior school days. As she took in his presence, her mind raced with one question: "How on earth did I end up in this situation?"

Bimbo wasted no time and inquired, "Femi, were you at the party?" She seemed genuinely surprised, given her assumption that such gatherings weren't my usual scene.

Femi hesitated for a moment before responding, "Yeah, I was, but I didn't expect to see you there. I thought this wasn't your kind of setting."

she nodded, trying to make sense of my impromptu appearance at the party. "Well, you're right. It's not my scene, but I've been going through a lot lately, and I needed some space to clear my head. By the way, do you have any idea how long we'll have to stick around here?"

Femi shifted uneasily, his eyes darting around the room. "Honestly," he replied nervously, "I think it might be a while. The night might just stretch on."

I couldn't help but wonder if he was merely using the situation as an excuse to spend more time with me. However, in the back of my mind, I knew that safety should be my priority. The last thing my mother needed was another tragedy, and I couldn't let my guard down so easily.

The next morning, I hurriedly left before Femi woke up. I couldn't believe I spent the night in that wretched shed. As I made my way, Femi called out, "Simbi! Wait up, let me escort you." I didn't argue and allowed him to accompany me. He hesitated and said, "I've been wanting to talk about us, Simbi."

I paused in disbelief, taken aback by his audacity. With a stern look, I hissed in irritation and walked away. I muttered aloud, "Can you believe this foolish boy, talking about a relationship after everything I've been through?"

The following week, despite the turmoil from Bimbo's terrible weekend, she managed to make it to school. After a long and hectic day, Femi pulled her aside once more. "Simbi, please, can we talk?"

Exasperated, she replied, "Oh my days, Femi! I really don't have the energy for this."

He persisted, "Just hear me out. I know about your situation. Let me be there for you."

I felt agitated but suddenly considered that maybe I needed a form of escape—a distraction from my troubles. Thoughts raced through my mind: Femi had money, and a bit of pampering wouldn't hurt. But then I questioned if it was morally right to think like this after Baba's death. In the end, I thought, "You only live once." It seemed to have worked for Bimbo when she had a fling with Gbenga during her aunt's passing, and now she was thriving on her own.

So, I agreed to be with Femi, if only to take my mind off things. Weeks passed, and things started getting serious. Femi showered me with attention—taking me on dates, paying for my lunch, and driving me to and from school. It was as if he worshipped me, and those weeks turned out to be the best for me.

The next day proved disastrous for the Adebajo family. "You're incredibly foolish, Ronke!" she shouted. "How could you abandon your brother and me to hang out with that worthless boy after all we've endured? You're forbidden from going out again!"

"Mum, you can't say that! I'm no longer a child. I've been running this household since Baami's passing. You're just there, nestled in the corner. Are you the only one who feels pain? Where were you when Sheri and I needed you? Se emi lo nba soro, you are rude. Ronke retorted.

Their argument escalated with both shouting until Sheri, teary-eyed, peeked into the room. Bimbo stormed out, kissed Sheri on the forehead, and whispered "all would be well soon." She hastily packed her belongings and called Femi for a pickup.

On Femi's arrival Bimbo jumps out of the window and rushes into the car.

There is something off about him Bimbo thought to herself, ahan is that not Alcohol im smelling ? Femi what is going on ? Why are you smelling of booze. Femi arrived, and Bimbo noticed something amiss. "Is that alcohol I smell?" she wondered. "Femi, what's happening?"

Femi, clearly drunk, replied, "Bimbo, please, I'm exhausted. It's been a long day. I've come to get you. Now, what's the matter?"

In a state of irritation, Bimbo fought to free herself from the confines of the car, while frustration boiled within Femi. He raised his voice, demanding, "Where do you think you're headed? Don't upset me Bimbo!", you would hate yourself. Amid their tumultuous struggle, seemingly out of nowhere, his hand connected with her cheek, causing her to let out a piercing scream. She clung to hope that Sheri or their neighbours might hear her distress, but they remained silent, locked within the confines of the car as Femi abruptly drove away..

SHUT UP!" he yells at me, cutting my protests of.

His eyes have this unfamiliar glint in them, he looks crazy.

He's driving with full speed.

The craziest idea pops up in my mind and without thinking it through, I do it.

I jump out of the moving car.

I land roughly on my side and keep rolling down to the side of the main road. It is really late at night so there are not that many cars on the road. I do not even check myself for bruises. The adrenaline helps me get up and run down the nearest street for safety.

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I snap out of my thoughts as I hear footsteps along the road, the night could not get any worse I tell myself, expecting for the worst to happen.

"Bimbo! Bimbo! Bimbo!"

Formatted: English (United States)

It's him. Oh my God!, I'm scared

I should have just stayed home with my mother. Why do I never listen?

The footsteps become louder and I can sense that he is getting closer to me.

The street light begin to twitch and a bright light coming from a torch temporarily blinds me.

He pulls me roughly like he did back in the car. I can see clearly now that I do not have a torch in my face.

I take a good look at him and the man I once liked dearly and held in high regard is now the scariest thing to me.

He pulls me to his car, pushes me to the back seat and makes me lie on my back.

My greatest fear.

He unzips his trousers and I mentally prepare for what is about to come.

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Months passed and Simbi still could not speak of the incident with Femi to anyone. One fateful night, Simbi's dreams took a terrifying turn. She found herself running through a labyrinthine maze, pursued by an unseen terror. Her breaths came in frantic gasps as she raced through endless corridors, but she couldn't see her pursuer.

The chase led her to a room filled with mirrors, each reflecting a different facet of her pain and sorrow. It was in this room that Simbi finally came face to face with her tormentor. The monster she had been fleeing from was none other than herself. She was running from her own past, her guilt, and her pain.

Simbi's reflection in the mirrors was distorted by tears, but she could no longer deny the truth. The demons that haunted her were of her making, born from her inability to forgive herself for things beyond her control.

With a blood-curdling scream, Simbi woke up, drenched in sweat and gasping for air. It was a pivotal moment. She realized that before she could heal, she needed to forgive herself and let go of the burden of her past.

Days turned into weeks, Simbi embarked on a journey of self-forgiveness, she began to mend the shattered pieces of her soul. The healing process was slow and arduous, but Simbi was determined.

In the end, it was a simple but profound truth that guided her: Simbi found peace knowing that "To move forward, we must first confront the demons within."