

Story Title; WAR

By; Iremide Olasope

To Little Banke, it was a beautiful time to take a walk with her Father, Adeleke the King of Iyemu Land. The December air was crisp and the sun was beautifully shone on them as they walked down the Village escorted by Adeleke's entourage of hefty bare chested guards. The villagers bowed to them at every encounter, loudly chanting greetings to the king. The Adoration the little girl had for her father could not be hidden, her wild smile hung perfectly on her face. Her father was powerful and revered, he was a man of war; it was what made their walk much more worth it, for She hardly ever saw her father, there was always a war to conquer.

War; the clash of Iron against the Iron of an opposing army, sweats and blood, gushing of intestines, arrows to the heart, bruises that heal and wounds that would never heal, setting of huts to flames, losses and conquer. The head of a king in a box and his people in a cage. The conquerors' merry mixed with the Agony of the War Preys. Why? Many reasons are given to it; lies, revenge, theft, a fight for superiority, injustice stories of ages but that which suffices; is simply because It is Life. You don't choose it, it just happens and you come to accept it as what it was, a norm. Just as it was to Banke.

As they walked closer to the boarder of the village, the beauty of a tree in the forest calls to Banke "Father, Look at the tree. It's fruits look so beautiful, I bet it would be as sweet" she beckoned on her father, the one who had never said 'no' to her. Adeleke looked to his entourage, standing Alert, waiting for an instruction from him for they knew he would do anything for his daughter yet unsure if he'd go as far as start a war, they weren't trained to question, they were trained to obey instructions but he shook his head. That was the tree that marked the boarder between Iyemu and Omiran; the neighbouring village with which for ages Iyemu had had nothing to do. History dated as far back as the reign of ten Kings before Adeleke had written their destinies that way. A war had surged and a calm had settled upon it but there was never to be an alliance between them. Even Adeleke didn't understand the stories. But letters of war were not written to be understood, they were written to be inherited, to pass down one sided stories from one generation to another, hates inherited, enemies acquired and a thin line not to be crossed, in this case; a thick tree. And all those he was set to pass down to his young daughter, for what is a relay without a baton!

"Banke, I've told you about Omiran village, haven't I?"

"Yes father, those who took our great, great, great fore-fathers as slaves. They took our lands and killed our people"

Adeleke smiled at the brilliance of his daughter, to him it was beyond the words she said, it was the mannerism with which she spoke. The hate in her tone. She really would be a great woman

king one day, he thought, for in their books a woman could be King according to Lineage. "Well, that's the Tree that marks our truce. It tells us they have nothing to do with us and neither should we, if crossed their guards are ready to be at war" He noticed the sad countenance on his daughter's face, "and you know, your father never loses a war" Banke smiled at the statement, "but you're here with me and I want to keep you safe" He lifted her in his arm, "when I return you safely to your mother, I would ask the warriors to come pluck as many as you want for you and be ready for war" He meant it, to Adeleke war was all he knew. Though he had just gotten back from a war with Ipinle Village, he'd gladly go back to another for his daughter's happiness but the start of a war is all that can be foretold, the end is to be known when it is known and like he said, his daughter was with him.

The fate of a war seemed to rest on the choice of a little girl, how badly she desired the fruit of the Boarder tree but her father had just returned from one war, she'd love to keep him with her until another matter causes her father's face to be turned to the flames of war. "Never mind, Father. I have enough options from Ipinle's spoils anyway"

Adeleke nodded and continued his walk with his daughter in his arms, some lives had just been saved.

Adepemo had her grandsons seated around her under the moonlight as she shared stories of wars she had experienced first-hand, "...Children couldn't find their parents, huts were burnt down, there were blood and bodies at every corner. The sights were gory." The younger boys closed their eyes in fear.

"Which is better? To start a war or to call a truce?" Adeniji, the first son of the king Adeniran asked his grandmother, Adepemo; the woman who birthed the king Adeniran, the King of Omiran, the Father of Adeniji, Adedire and Adepitan. All boys.

"Adeniji, a truce is a war in silence. It is a war waiting to be triggered. There is no rest at truce just no blood..."

"...and no flames" she smiled when her grandson took the words out of her mouth, she believed Adeniji would be a great king someday, he was an attentive boy. "Is there a better option?"

"An alliance"

"What's an Alliance, Mama?"

"When the pages of war are torn and a new page is turned for a fresh story"

"Let's do that then" Adepemo arched her brows in confusion,

"Let's do what?"

"You know...tear the pages of war and turn a new page. My Father can do that."

Adepemo burst into laughter, leaving her with deep coughs after. "It's more than words, it's action and it takes two to tango. Peace can never be one-sided, the kings must agree and their agreements must be the bidding of their people"

Adeniji sighed, "it is so simple, yet so complicated"

Adepemo pulled Adeniji closer, "But your father has been king for twelve years now and we've had no war"

"Well...that's because Grandpa called a truce with most warring villages, but like you said a truce is a war awaiting it's trigger."

15 years had passed since the walk with her Father but every word that was spoken stuck fresh in her mind like an olive leaf, they had become her guiding lamp as she sat on her father's throne, for her father Adeleke had been struck with a plague with which no cure was found in her village but words had gone from a concerned chief who mentioned he had heard a rumor that Omiran village had the greatest physician amongst all neighbouring villages. King Adeleke blatantly refused to bow to any help from Omiran Village. His pride, his ancestral heritage, the values and norms he had met in practice were too much to stake for his life. He had publicly declared that a compromise could only be made if he was dead and die, he did. But not before the concerned chief was put to death because, how dare he suggest such evil?

Adeleke's death in itself was a lesson, another page added to further emphasize the chapters on hate and war. For it was then written; King Adeleke a king through and through, chose death over a compromise with those who had held his fathers bound. The words Banke reminisced on day and night as nothing short of such courage and determination is expected of a woman King in her prime.

"Your Father was a king to the marrow, let his life guide you. Don't take a step back! Move on higher and upward. Expand our territories and if there be any barrier hesitate not in breaking them down. Heaven forbids it that we go back to days in a cage. Let your Father's life guide you!" The priest had said to her on her coronation. And indeed, she heard. She reigned in fury as her Father's life was her guide.

The party from his coronation had just died down, when he walked into his grandmother's chamber. Aged Adepemo never knew she'd live to see her son Adeniran die and Adeniji rise to be King.



Adeniran had died an untimely death from a scorpion bite, it's venom could only have been extracted with a leaf, the tree of which was only known to be found in Iyemu Village.

"Father, I don't care about what the chieives and the people say, but if I'd have to grovel through the forest and lick the feet of the King of Iyemu Village, I will!" Adeniji had countered in the King's chamber as Adeniran laid weak on his bed. The physicians had tried all they could but they needed the leaves.

"Adeniji, I don't want to die too. But a king is only as honorable in the support of his chieives and his people" he struggled to speak.

Shaking his head, Adeniji voiced louder "No, Father. A king is only as honorable as his next breathe" he paused, "And the breathe of the king ought to mean something to his chieives and his people. They should want to keep you. You are a great King, you built our land. You developed the Wells and reduced the taxes of the farmers, neighbouring villages adore you. You have sacrificed so much as a king. You deserve to live irrespective of what history tells us... I am walking into the forest that separates us from Iyemu. I am getting the leaves!" He rushed his words in anger and in pausing for breath, he realised King Adeniran had given up the ghost, somewhere in the mumbles of his words.

"Father, Father..."

Just like that, a king was sacrificed on the Altars of war and rivalry.

"Mama, how do I rule?"

"King Adeniji" Adepemo called out his name, singing the Royal chants and praise, "You've been trained all your life for a time as now."

"Mama" he adjusted his crown, the weight of the gold mold had not settled in with him, "Can I not trust my own inner leading? Can I go against the bits of history that has kept turning us against the others?" He stared at the earth beneath his feet and continued,

"I do know that we might not have perfectly united villages, I'm saying if we are going to war. Let it be for what was done now and not left overs of past kings. I want to make my own enemies and make my own friends but how do i do that, when I'm surrounded by chieives who would rather honor history than the present. So, mama...how do I rule? Do I voice my own opinions or do I abide by the dictates of the dead. Do I give peace a trial or should I carry on the leftovers of my Father's fight? Do I just go with the flow or give my inner leading an ear. I don't want to be a king at war but it feels like inheriting my Father's wars is what makes me king "

Adepemo smiled, "History has built our way of life. Our foundation builds our future. It is good that we know our stories, it helps us see how far we've come and how far we still need to, we can't erase what has been done but we can decide a new narrative from here onwards and I trust you to do that which is right."

Adepemo sighed, her years on earth had failed her. She had no answers to the young King's confusion and could only wish that he finds enlightenment and fulfillment in his reign as king.

"For long, we've had to stop the expansion of our land, because of the truce. They took half our land and then call a truce? We need to do something now, especially when we've heard how their new king is nothing but a coward!" Chief Awo stated at the meeting with the King, Banke and the other Chieives nodded in agreement

Banke looked from her a Chief to another till she scanned the countenance of all six chieives
"That will mean we are the ones breaking the truce, a war will come!"

"Let the war come, we will win over the coward King. Our land will only get wider and our ranks amongst other villages higher"

"They are expanding their lands, picking on ours. They have broken the truce!" Chief Iko shouted,
"They have declared war and we must respond!"

"Ready the Chariots!" Adeniji stood from his throne.

Adeniji's men and Chariots stood ready at the boarder in their armors and weapons, so were Banke's men and Chariots. The Sun quickly setting around them like it knew what was about to go down. Men from both sides stood Alert awaiting instructions and signals.

"We meet under such circumstance, typical" Adeniji shouted from his horse

"I must say the response of the coward King was faster than imagined" Banke's men laughed at the mockery.

" The Coward King, is that what you call me?"

"Words have reached us, we heard there is a king who is scared of war, it must have started amongst your people"

"So, peace was never an option?"

"I'm no bastard!"

"It really does take two to tango! And I guess in history, our decisions is what continues the story. Whether we choose right or wrong, war or peace, the story must continue. I'd hoped we could come to a compromise and not whine like babies but communicate and agree like the kings we are, for the lives and properties of our people rest on our shoulders. But I wouldn't fold

my arms after you've brought war to my door step."

"War is all I know, I'm not submitting to your cheating compromise"

"Then I guess a united villages is not happening today, I could only pray that it happens someday but you won't be taking over my land and my people. Not today!" He shouted, "soldiers! Today, we fight so that what's ours would not be taken! Ready?"

"Ready!" The voices of a thousand Soldiers responded but aa they approached Iyemu's Army, Banke Shouted, "Wait!". Adeniji held up his hand for his soldiers to stop.

"What do you suggest we do?" Surprise plastered the faces of her Army, but Banke's silent prayers were answered; for wars to stop and for stories that continue from her to be of peace. The peace she had wished for when she couldn't get a fruit she desired as a child and when she couldn't get physicians for her sick father. She had feared that her different notion to war would be seen as her weakness.

The kings came together and spoke on development and strategies, it was met with grumbles but the kings words were law. The boarders were opened for trade and even though they had to settle fights amongst their people for the notion of hates and cheats still abounds, a right step was taken when the war was brought to an halt, together they grew their markets, structures and culture. Why war, when it is fully known that lives were at stake? Why destroy properties that took years to be built when displeasure could be trashed and agreements could be come to? Why war, when peace is an option?





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