

My life is hard, I know life in general is hard but believe me, my life is way harder. I'm barely a few minutes away from waking up fully but even as I lay on my bed with my eyes still closed waiting for the time it will finally give in to the morning's sense of urgency, I already know that today is going to be another hard and hectic day. It's not like my days aren't the usual but today already feels different, much more different, it already feels like I won't like it at all. I wish I could just stay on this bed and probably sit this day out or maybe even the rest of my days, or maybe even die off somehow or something but as soon as my alarm rings, my very own call to action, every thought of resting or chilling immediately transforms to the pressing mindset of my country Nigeria of why I must make it, I have to make it, I need to make it, I will make it and so finally, I get off the bed.

Immediately I get off the bed, the first sound that creeps into my ears is the voice of my mother praying in the sitting room. That woman and prayer, that woman prays so much that I feel like if they were such a thing as angels, they would have probably gotten tired of being her intermediary to God.

God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, angels, demons, and the big bad boy, Lucifer. Whether they are real or not, whether there's a life after now or not, to be completely frank anything concerning them, I don't know and honestly, I don't care. It's been a long time since I went to Sunday school or church in general and I don't believe in any of that fictional propaganda. The Bible stories are just as silly as the idea of aliens or a better Nigeria, I'm better off believing in the existence of the likes of Sango and Oya. Do you expect me to believe that man who is supposed to be God sent by the same God came down to die for us so that he being full man and full God could reconcile us with the other or another God whom they call Father who was in heaven sharing his essence but not his person? what sort of snake swallowing 36 million naira cash is that, Do people really believe in this rubbish? Maybe that was little me back then when I didn't know better but now I'm grown enough to know it was all only aimed at being the best story ever written but unfortunately, I am into reality not stories.

So I start my usual morning preparations, I brush, bathe, and wear my clothes, a native blue suit, I got a lot of these suits while I was in school studying Law. It was compulsory to always look corporate and so my father bought a lot of them and gave me some of the ones he had when he was younger. Life seemed better while

he was alive those days, he died way too young but what can I say, nature gives and takes and we all have to move on.

Just as I am about to finish up my preparations, I get a call from my girlfriend, Tolani. If there's anyone I cherish almost to my mother, it would be Tolani, Tolani has been there, is there and I believe will always be there. I may not be married to Tolani but I believe that she is the clear definition of "*For better or worse, in sickness and in health, in good and in bad*" and this is because I started dating Tolani when things were good, very good.

I went to a private university and it wasn't on a scholarship, it wasn't a favour from a relative and it definitely wasn't as my mother would say "*God's mercy and favour upon our family*" It was purely because my father had money and so with all the money flowing in my life, a lot of girls kept clinging around me, I could have any girl at the mention of their names, I could it have all but Tolani.

This was very shocking to me because I expected that if anything, she in particular would trip the most for me. Tolani family status was the opposite of mine, they were in the struggling lower middle class and Tolani only entered the school based on a scholarship which was handled by her church. She was and still is a church girl.

From being the one who was most admired, I started being the admirer of the one who didn't even notice let alone admire. I tried everything life had to offer to get her, money, fame, class, you name it but Tolani wasn't phased, Tolani wasn't yielding, Tolani wasn't bulging, Tolani was different and although it got tiring, I didn't want to stop. It wasn't until my final year that she finally gave me a chance.

"*I wanted you to know that money isn't everything,*" she said when we started dating. Even when things started getting bad for me after my father died and every supposed friend I had left, Tolani stayed and Tolani is still staying.

I honestly appreciate her for all she is and all she has done but frankly, at this point in my life, I don't think I deserve her anymore. Things keep going down for me, and I'm not trying to compare but although slow and steady, things are way more better for her financially from when we started dating till now. When she finished school, she got a good job after a while, again, due to connections from her church.

I may not believe in God, church, or any of that rubbish but I can't logically deny that fantasy has helped Tolani in her life. However, I can't say the same for myself, so if there is a God, then I conclude that he must be a partial one who likes to have favourites, and if Tolani is part of his favorites while I am not, it doesn't seem fair for her to be unequally yoked with me. Even if she says money isn't everything the world we live in declares that money is by far almost everything, if not all things. If I can't even provide that for my girlfriend of about 4 years who is probably hoping for marriage soon, then what's the use?

My mother suddenly appears from nowhere and shouts out my name,

*"Gabriel, can't you hear your phone ringing?!"*

I immediately snap back to reality and realize that I had been frozen thinking to myself all this time. As I try to pick up the call, my phone stops ringing, and then I see 4 missed calls from Tolani, so that must mean I was out for quite some time. I immediately try to call her back.

*"My love, Is anything the matter, why didn't you pick up? you had worried", she says.*

*"I'm sorry, I was... I was busy with my mom"*

*"Oh, I just wanted to greet you this morning, and also, have you left your house yet? If you haven't, Sarah can drop you off"*

*"No need baby, I'm already on the road"*

*"On the road? I thought..."*

Before she finishes, I panic, cut the call, and immediately turn off my phone, and then I heard my mom's voice again.

*"Why did you lie to her?"*

*"I... I don't know"*

I leave my mom and go back to my room to breathe. In truth, I know exactly why I did what I did.

Sarah is Tolani's friend from work and they go to work together in Sarah's car. From time to time, they offered to drop me off and everything was going fine until I started to notice her subtle disdain for me. She didn't make it clear because of my girlfriend but she sure made it noticeably there. She let it slip out during a particular conversation about marriage we were all having on our way to work one day. I can't remember everything in detail on that ride but I can never forget these particular words "...any man who cannot comfortably take care of his girlfriend isn't fit to have one much less a wife" The innocence of Tolani didn't let her put much thought to it but I did and much more because when Sarah made that statement, she was looking at me through the interior rearview mirror, so I'm certain that she was indirectly referring to me.

However, I can't stare at my mirror and continue sobbing, Life doesn't care, so instead I let my anger fuel me enough to head on regardless.

Immediately I get out, I see little Ebuka playing in the street. Ebuka is my neighbor's 7-year-old son. I don't particularly like my neighbor but I like Ebuka. He reminds me of the younger me when I still had dreams and all the hope in the world. I may never be able to actualize my dreams but I really do hope that this cruel world would at least give this little boy a chance. If one can't make it, at least the other should.

Ebuka sees me and comes to greet me, I don't have much but I decide to give him 200 naira for the day. The boy is so appreciative that he lays down on the floor to thank me. I stood him up, gave him a word of advice, and continued on my way.

As soon as I get to the bus stop, I check my pockets for my money to pay the bus conductor but then I realize that the same budgeted 200 naira I'm supposed to use is what I gave to Ebuka earlier. As much as this shouldn't add to my anger, it somehow does as I walk under the scorching hot sun to my office.

I get to my office and as usual, it's the same scornful envious eyes perching on me coming from my colleagues. They dislike me because of my degree which is very strange because it's not like I brag about it, it's not like it has helped me get a higher position in the company. I'm a Law degree holder who works in a media company earning 80 thousand for God's sake. What's there to be hatefully envious about? If anything, this is a serious downgrade to all the years and time I spent in the university and then Law school but still, they choose to see it their way. This is why I choose not to have any friends whatsoever in this useless place. Whenever I get here, I do the same thing, I go to my desk and bury my eyes into my computer far away from the eyes of others.

As soon as I get to my desk, my boss, Mr. Alabi appears from nowhere and starts shouting about my lateness. I try to explain but he just keeps shouting and shouting. He shouts to the hearing of everyone in the office as they turn to us. For the first few minutes, I try my best not to talk back but as he continues to shout to the point of threatening to fire me, I imagine yelling back at him.

*"Fire me? Did you just say fire me? Do you think I want to be in the Godforsaken place that doesn't seem to prosper? If you want to fire me, just say it!"*

Immediately I'm done supposedly imagining, I look around the room and discover that it's very quiet with everyone looking at me in awe. Apparently, I wasn't imagining. As I try to apologize, my boss says *"You're fired!"* At first, I want to beg but the anger in me burns so much that I carry the desktop on my table, smash it in the ground, and leave.

I go to a bar and order as many drinks as possible and when the night time comes, I head home. I get to my house and my mother sees me. She tries to talk but I immediately let her know that I am not in the mood for anyone. I get on my bed and my anger starts to get mixed up with sadness, tears begin to fill my eyes, where do I go from here? As I think my mom comes into the room with her phone ringing telling me Tolani is calling. I forgot to turn it back since I turned it off. At first, I do not feel like talking to her but then I take the phone from my mom and pick up the call.

*"Baby, what's the matter, I've been trying to get to you since morning, are you..."*

*“Tolani, I want a break up”*

*“What?”*

*“I lost my job”*

*“Why, what happened?”*

*“Because I am a good-for-nothing useless piece of trash, Tolani! I am! I am nothing! My life is nothing, my entire world is nothing! Nothing! And I’m tired of... I’m tired of making you go through it with me, you deserve more, much more and I can’t give it to you. I’m sorry”*

I cut the call before she can speak and hand the phone back to my mother. She tries to speak to me but I lay back in my bed in tears, so she leaves.

Hours pass and all I can think about is suicide, I think and think and suddenly, my mom bursts into my room and says that neighbors told her there may be armed robbers in the street so she wants us to start praying. Of all the nights in the world, I can’t even plan my suicide in peace. How much does this world hate me? Out of nowhere, the rage in me burst open and I start to scream at the top of my voice calling out to the robbers. My mother begs but I don’t care anymore, what’s the worst that could happen, they kill me? I was already planning to do that myself so they better kill me!

I kick my door open and continue to yell, I keep yelling and then I see a figure hiding somewhere close to my neighbour’s door. Whether it be an armed robber, spirit or demon, I’m too angry to care. So I rush over to it, drag it out, and start to beat the hell out of it, I use everything I can find to hit it, I keep hitting it until the blood gushes out so much that it stains my shirt and then I finally calm down. Then I hear a faint voice say *“Uncle Donald”*. My mind and eyes start to clear up and to my greatest surprise, I realize that the one lying almost dead on the floor is little Ebuka, my neighbour’s son.

