

**DEAR
OBAJIMI**

A SHORT STORY

SHARON ABIMBOLA SALU

Dear Obajimi

A Short Story

By Sharon Abimbola Salu

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LETTER 1
One of Many

Our Home
Somewhere in Lagos

August 1, 1998

Dear Obajimi,

Nobody hides letters in the kitchen. Except me. An old Bournvita tin will hold all my letters, far from the garri and rice, even farther from prying eyes. You will read them one day, I'm sure of it. I wonder if you see the connection: the tin was once filled with brown sweetness, desired by many. The sweetness is gone; now, it keeps secrets. Like this house, once full of love, joy and laughter. They all left with you, Jimi. Our home now holds memories alone.

Remember that conversation we had the night you bought me suya? NEPA had been especially kind to us and you forgot a bottle of Schweppes in the freezer. It had lain there, undisturbed, for two whole days, two days of uninterrupted power supply.

It was when I went in search of something cold to drink that I discovered the shattered remains of your Schweppes. The bottle had exploded in the freezer.

I told you about it, and you laughed it off. From nowhere, the conversation jumped to Yaba Left. You said you were convinced that there were many people in the psych ward at Yaba Left who simply exploded because they kept too much bottled up inside. Angst, pain, bitterness, regret, frustration, concentrated and locked up in the heart of one human being. Like every story that ends on a sad note, the turning point is predicated by two telling words: one day.

Well, one day, one day, that person exploded and that was what brought him to Yaba Left.

It's funny the things you remember when you're alone. I remembered that conversation today, and decided it was time to write. There's so much I've kept bottled up inside and I'm afraid that if it continues much longer, I'll explode. This letter is my precaution.

It is one of many.

My pen may judge me, but I know the paper won't. Both will bear witness to all that has happened since the day you disappeared.

Sincerely,
Your Morenike

LETTER 2
Dare to Hope

August 2, 1998

Dear Obajimi,

You're alive!

We all thought you were gone, but after the dream I had this afternoon, I know for sure that you're *not dead*.

You might be wondering why I thought you were dead in the first place.

There's one detective – I call him “Inspector Bobby” – who has been assigned to your case. That man is stubborn. He reminds me of you in so many ways. He told me something the first time he came here. He said that he has investigated cases like this before, where people go missing. Based on his experience, and judging from the amount of time since you were last seen (by tomorrow, Monday, it'll be exactly one week since you disappeared), you were more than likely dead.

Well, you can imagine the sort of mood that put me in. I told him “I reject it in Jesus' name. My husband is not dead.” Because that's what you do with things you don't want: you reject them. I rejected his so-called theory, that evil pronouncement cloaked in logic, with every cell in my body.

Nothing in me agreed with him.

It was only after my vehement rejection that he now revised his statement. He changed it to this one:

“Death is a possibility. A strong one, but I am not 100% sure.”

He went on to tell me that of all the cases of missing persons he had investigated in his long career, very few of them were found alive. And when they were restored to their families, things were never the same. That experience, whatever it was, had somehow altered them irreparably. Jimi, what do you think he meant by “very few?” Is that maybe 3 out of 100? If it is, then that's three out of Lord knows how many hundreds. Only three who came back from the place of memory to the land of the living, three people whose families got to touch, hold, feel, hug, and kiss them once more and for always.

It looked bleak, but my response to him was “I'll take my chances.”

As if I had a choice.

But all this was before today, before I heard something that coupled with this dream I had today, has given me reason to hope again.

Your Hopeful Wife,
Morenike

LETTER 3
Don't Give Up

August 2, 1998

Dear Obajimi,

I had to cut my last letter short, the one I wrote this afternoon because someone was at the gate. It was your mother. I'll tell you more about her visits later. She has gone now, and once again, I have the house to myself.

Pastor's message this morning was truly uplifting. But that isn't saying a lot. That's like saying that water is wet. Should it be dry? Let me take this one step further.

Jimi, believe me when I tell you that the entire sermon was custom-made for me. I still haven't told Pastor that we're looking for you, but I can tell from the many messages he keeps sending through church members, inviting me to a one-on-one in his office, that he knows that you're missing. Bad news like that travels faster than the speed of light in this Lagos.

His message, the one that lifted my spirits considerably and strengthened my soul was titled, "Don't Give Up." And Jimi, when I say it was custom-made for me, I mean every word.

It's like God saw exactly how the whole thing - your disappearance and the calamity it has unleashed - peppered my heart. And even though I couldn't articulate it, He understood me at a depth where words were just useless, pulled me close and rubbed balm to soothe my soul.

But He didn't stop there.

My nakedness was not hidden from Him. He took my measurements and handcrafted a robe of words to cover me completely.

Because Jimi, in the days since you left, I've felt naked. It's one of the reasons I started writing these letters to you in the first place, to record, to remember how exposed, how vulnerable your absence has made me.

Pastor's message lifted me out of the funky mood I was in.

To be honest, I was in pretty bad shape, barely made it to church on time, and just found myself weeping at everything. Announcements o, praise and worship o, offering time ... It didn't matter. The tears just kept flowing and after a while, my hanky became pretty useless, drenched in snort and salty water. The woman who sat beside me must have asked a hundred times if I was okay, and every time my response was the same:

"I'm fine."

To make matters worse, there was a baby dedication that morning, and of all the names the child should bear, it was yours:

Obajimi.

I nearly tore out of the auditorium screaming. Was there a conspiracy with all the elements in this world for everything to remind me that the love of my life, the one who had promised to protect me through every season of life, was missing?

But as you will see, the baby dedication was painful for other reasons, not just the coincidence of names.

The ovulation chart is still on the door of our bedroom. I still saw it as I tied the pitiful looking *gele* now lying on our bed as I write this letter. It was pitiful then, it's even more pathetic now. In fact, wait ...

There! I've thrown it away. And that's what I've been doing since Pastor's message this morning: throwing away anything that tells me that I am to be pitied because my husband is missing.

Like I told my mother, I don't want to hear anymore "O ma se o" or "Pele." What are they sorry for? I don't want any condolences. You're not dead. I am not a widow. Or are these ones offering pity the people who kidnapped my husband? No, this year, I have decided that in this home, all people will hear will be *ariwo ayo*, shouts of joy, not "O ma se o," the prelude to exaggerated tongue clicking and much headshaking as if they just heard about a disaster that befell a complete stranger in another country.

No, I refuse to accept pity from people who never even knew you, people who didn't know the sound of your voice or why you started growing a moustache or where *that* birthmark is. They don't know your quirks, your habits, what makes you tick and those seemingly little, yet all-important things I've discovered firsthand these past fourteen months.

Jimi, that child dedication was a reminder of how normal our lives were before you disappeared. We were going to have a baby, finally, after "enjoying each other" for one whole year, something none of our parents understood.

At 25, my parents felt I had gotten married at the best possible time. And they, along with your parents, expected me to capitalize on my good fortune by giving birth to offspring they could call grandchildren.

"These are your most fertile years," your mother kept telling me, and I wanted so badly to reply her with "Yes, ma. And I will still be fertile at 26, and 27 and 28--"

But I held my tongue. Your mother is not one to engage in a verbal wrestling match.

Our parents couldn't understand why we would choose to wait one whole year after our wedding, for the singular pleasure of enjoying each other's company, unburdened by the extra weight of responsibility that comes with bringing a child into this world, another mouth to feed, another human being who depends on you completely for everything. They thought we were silly, but we were on the same page, you and I, a tag team united against any challenge.

But now, I deeply regret waiting. Maybe if we had a baby now, it would give me someone else to fight for, other than myself, a welcome distraction from everything that reminds me that you're not here.

I say we were on the same page, but you know that's not completely true.

Remember what you said when I told you that we should start trying for a "little 'Jimi'"? You said we should try for a "little Morenike" instead, a girl who looks just like her father.

Even as I write this, I chuckle to myself. You, Jimi, you wanted a girl who looked like you. It never occurred to me that you'd want a daughter as your first child until I heard you say it. And I remember thinking that no matter how many years we spent together, there would always be "unknown layers of Jimi," things about you that remain a mystery. And I was fine with that. But the all-encompassing mystery, the one that needs solving *pronto*, is this mystery of your disappearance.

Jimi, where are you? I ask again: Jimi, where are you? Why am I sitting in our room writing letters to you instead of speaking with you face-to-face?

May the voice of my ink transcend time and space, to call you back from wherever you are, and bring you back to me.

Your Faithful Wife,
Morenike

LETTER 4
Forgiveness

August 6, 1998

Dear Obajimi,

Today is Thursday.

I haven't written a single word since Sunday, and it isn't for lack of trying. I sit at this desk, fully intending to write, but I only succeed in covering the blank sheet with tears, not written words. Maybe these letters are not meant to be an everyday affair.

I've made peace with it.

That tin will receive more letters on the days when my pen prevails over my heart.

I realized that when I ended my last letter, there were so many questions I left unanswered. I'll deal with them one by one.

I didn't want to go and see Pastor because I'm still angry with him for the way he treated me last time. Do you remember? It was your idea. We went to see him for prayers after we made a concrete decision to start having children. Left to me, that meeting was unnecessary.

Along with us, we took the doctor's report giving us both a clean bill of health, or in your words, "proof that [your] boys were swimming strong and [my] girls were ready for action."

I remember the amused laughter that followed when you saw the disgusted look on my face at that analogy, especially when you added that "[my] girls should be ready to shout goal! when the ball entered the net." I begged you never to repeat those words in public, and you teased me saying that that was the first thing you would share with Pastor.

As it turned out, that would not be the only thing that would upset me that evening. Remember what Pastor said after we told him there was nothing wrong with either of us?

He said we should pray and ask God to bless us with the fruit of the womb. Then, he turned to me, and emphatically said, "Especially you, Sister Morenike. Ladies of nowadays can live such filthy lives, and it will take the grace of God for them to conceive especially after all those abortions."

I was furious, but out of respect for his graying head, I told him I wasn't one of "those ladies." He ignored me and repeated the abortion bit. That got to me, but you intervened, and told him I wasn't like that. Only then, did he back down.

Now, why would I go back to such a man for advice or comfort over my missing husband, especially now that there's no one to defend me? I refuse to go and see him because you know me: I will not play the meek, gentle, longsuffering wife convincingly and he'll know exactly what I think of him.

But all was forgiven on Sunday, after I heard that message.

Okay, to be frank, I haven't arrived at forgiveness yet. I'm keeping my distance, but we're getting there.

Your Affectionate Wife,
Morenike

LETTER 5
Changes

August 12, 1998

Dear Obajimi,

I forgot to tell you in my last letter about the changes that have taken place in my living arrangements. I can't afford 24/7 police protection. Why do I need it? I'll explain later. But honestly, I don't even want it. I just need company till you get back.

Your mother has come by several times to persuade me to come and live with her and your father till your return, but I politely turned her down every single time.

As distraught as I am over your disappearance, sorrow has not blinded me to the fact that moving in with your parents is a bad idea.

I still remember what it was like when we lived with them for the first three months of our marriage, the lack of privacy or independence or control, and I vowed that it was an experience I would never repeat. Willingly.

Instead, I make sure I visit them at least twice a week.

I refuse to be treated like a designated house help, cook and cleaner, and watch my independence revoked, which is exactly what will happen if I make the mistake of living with your parents.

Again.

Your father understood it immediately and backed off, but your mother was insistent. So, I came up with a temporary solution: I have asked my own parents to send my younger brother, Teju and my sister, Ronke, to come and stay with me for now. As you know, Teju is still writing JAMB and Ronke just finished her NYSC and is job hunting. They're happy to leave Ibadan for a while.

But I understand your parents' reasoning. They believe that this isn't the time for me to be on my own, and that by moving in with them, they can protect and comfort me, and receive the same from me, while the Police continue their investigation.

However, they don't understand that what I desire above anything else right now is normalcy. It's the routine of everyday life – getting up to pray, go to work, stop at the market, come home and cook or go to church in the evening or visit friends – these things keep me sane, keep me functioning as close to normal as possible, considering the circumstances.

I had to explain this to my parents too, and like your parents, they didn't understand it.

In fact, my mother still doesn't get it. She feels it is foolish for me to remain in our home all alone. In her words,

“Don't you know what people will say? They'll say you arranged for hired assassins or ritualists to kill your husband so you can enjoy his wealth alone,” to which I replied that although we were comfortable in our three-bedroom apartment, we were certainly not wealthy. She then added that “People will say your husband's friends who come to the house are there to have sex with you under the guise of checking up on you.”

I know what she means, but the same could be true even under my father's roof. Like I told her, I can't stop people from talking and inventing theories about how I'm handling your absence. What I can control is my reaction.

Minus the tears sha.

Even the Police believe I had a hand in your disappearance. I fear they may officially name me as a suspect. In fact, I fear that they have me penned down as one. I keep seeing these policemen, the so-called undercover detectives, who think I don't know they're following me, watching my every move.

But I refuse to leave my husband's house, our home. I still hold onto hope that you will return and that most things, if not all things, will return back to normal.

Speaking of the Police, did I tell you about Inspector Bobby Agberekeme?

That man, ehn ...

He reminds me so much of you: tall, wiry, with a face that looks perpetually poised to smile. I remember asking him why he always appeared to be amused, something I found surprising for someone whose job involved the occasional delivery of bad news, especially since he came face-to-face with some of the most dismal aspects of human behavior.

Do you know what he told me? He said you learn to develop a thick skin very fast, and you never let your face betray your heart.

So, as hard as it is, with everything that's been happening, I've been taking his advice and putting on a mask of cheer, when my heart is so heavy.

I think it's working because people, especially my colleagues at work, keep asking me how I'm able to stay strong and cheerful in spite of everything that is happening. I've told them "All na God" so many times that I now believe it.

I mean, how else can you explain it? That I've been able to function at any level of normalcy since you disappeared is nothing but the grace of God.

The day you disappeared, I didn't think to contact the Police until the next day. It wasn't the first time you hadn't come home. Remember the night you had a flat tire and had to stay at Tunji's house? I slept in our bed alone.

But my mind was at ease because I knew exactly where you were.

I knew you were safe.

You called me from Tunji's house to assure me that you were okay. Thank God NITEL had restored our phone line the week before. Remember they TOOSed (Telephone Out Of Service) the phone after we disputed the bill. If you hadn't called me that night, I would have been sick with worry.

But this time was different. This time there was no phone call, nothing out of the ordinary to alert me that something was wrong.

That Monday night, I prepared your food as usual, tired as I was after a hard day at work, and waited for you to come back home so we could eat together. But when at 10:00pm you didn't show up, I started to worry, and started calling up people including Tunji. But no one had seen or heard from you all day.

A horrible thought just crossed my mind: what if I just get up and prepare for work like you did that Monday morning and simply disappear like you did. Then what? It might seem incredulous, but just think about it, Jimi. See it from my perspective. If, like my friend, Kiki, has suggested, "they" called you, what is stopping "them" from calling me too?

I choose to believe that instead of that horrible thing coming to pass, you will come back home to me.

Like I was saying, that Monday night, I didn't sleep a wink. I was worried that you had been involved in a car accident and were lying helpless in a local hospital, surrounded by strangers. Or that you had been attacked by armed robbers, lying unconscious in a gutter,

somewhere. Can you blame me? When something of this nature happens, the worst theories readily present themselves, springing up in your mind like miserable weeds.

But not for one minute did it cross my mind that your disappearance was deliberate. No. That is, until Inspector Bobby came along.

The following day being a Tuesday, I was at the police station before 7:00am, to report you missing, but one of the policemen refused to let me file a report, stating that it wasn't up to 24 hours since your disappearance. Some of the policemen even said I had to wait 48 hours, and yet another one said I could file a missing person's report immediately.

I knew they were being technical, but there was nothing I could do. In the end, I waited for 24 hours before filing the report. While I waited, I hoped and prayed while waiting for their "24 hours" to *knack*, that I wouldn't need their help anyway.

Oh, how wrong I was!

I got to work late, of course, but my boss allowed me take the rest of the day off considering the situation at hand, and I spent the rest of the day, searching with your older brother, Fola, for you at places where we thought you might be. We called hospitals, clinics, other police stations, friends, relatives and everywhere we thought you might be. But no one had seen you.

When I got home that evening, policemen were waiting for me at home. They had found your car parked on Third Mainland Bridge, particulars intact, no Jimi.

"Madam, it's possible he jumped into the lagoon," one of the policemen said, and immediately, I told him, "God forbid. Not my husband."

Can you believe what the other one said to me?

"Madam, na wetin? So people wey dey throw themselves inside lagoon, no be person husband dem be?"

Yes, Jimi, that's what he said to me. I was furious, but I couldn't lose my head over this ignoramus. I went with them, and verified that it was indeed your car. It's sitting in our yard now, after parting with some *egunje* for them to release it. Talk about taking advantage of a bad situation.

So the car was found, but my Jimi is still missing.

Your Worried Wife,
Morenike

LETTER 6
Those Family Meetings

August 14, 1998

Dear Obajimi,

There is one particularly vexing thing I must share with you.

Three days after your disappearance, your parents called a family meeting, which went well for the first few minutes when your parents, brothers, uncles, aunties, cousins and other family members all consoled me.

But, then it got ugly.

They asked me if I knew anything about your disappearance, and I said “No.” Your father’s sister, Auntie Remi, got angry when I told her I wouldn’t follow her to any shrine to swear that I was innocent.

A shrine, Jimi! And this woman is a deaconess in her church. I told her my God would vindicate me. She just sneered at me, saying that my God should have kept my husband from disappearing in the first place. But I didn’t say anything. There’s no insult God in heaven hasn’t heard before, and I am convinced that He will truly vindicate me.

The next two family meetings were a lot less pleasant, full of accusations piled against me. Some said I was a bad wife, others called me barren. I remember scoffing at them, reiterating my confidence in God first, then in you, and finally, in our marriage vows.

The very last meeting I attended was two days ago, and I vowed after that, never to show my face at any of your family meetings anymore, because they left me more broken, battered and distressed than I was going in. And I saw them for what they were: opportunities for your family members, particularly the ones who never liked me from Day one, to attack and malign me with no respite.

Your aunties and uncles, and two of your three brothers have flat-out accused me of using you for money rituals. These so-called meetings have morphed into glorified inquisitions, where the sole aim is to get me to confess to doing something I didn’t do.

Jimi, my mental health is precious to me, especially in these trying times, and to preserve my sanity, there will be no more family meetings for me. Our meygard is under strict instructions not to let any of them into our compound, whether I’m in or not.

Why can’t people understand that the wife needs to be protected and comforted not attacked and accused in times like this?

As for your parents, with all due respect, Jimi, I’m seriously side-eyeing them.

Yes.

Although neither of them has openly accused me of orchestrating your disappearance, they didn’t exactly come to my defense either.

One of your uncles, the one who’s always doing *gra gra* like the thug he is, actually threatened to have me locked up in a police cell if I didn’t confess. The audacity of that man! If he went missing, would he want his wife locked up to elicit a false confession from her? Why are people so wicked? And please help me ask him, how will locking me up solve the mystery of your disappearance?

He finally backed down when I told him I had an uncle who was an Army General. Of course, I didn't add that my uncle was now retired and wasn't on speaking terms with my father because of a money dispute. He didn't need to know all that. He just needed to know I wouldn't simply roll over and let him bully me, and I think the "my uncle *na* soldier" bit did the trick.

It's because of all this that I've said 'bye bye' to all those family meetings. Rather than help, they're making things worse.

Now, I really need to talk about Inspector Bobby.

The other police officers limited themselves to questions like,

"When was he last seen? Did he quarrel with anyone? Did anyone owe him money? Was he having affairs? Any girlfriends?" to which I replied "No." If you owed anyone money, the creditors would've stepped out of the shadows to recover their money by now.

But it was Inspector Bobby who, for the first time since I invited the police to help, asked questions that seemed to move the case forward.

The first question he asked after he sat in the parlor and refused the bottle of Coke I offered him was,

"Madam, can you tell me about your husband's typical day?"

You can imagine my surprise at that question. It was open-ended, and allowed me to elaborate, rather than box me into a corner with questions that required a "Yes" or "No" answer, or worse yet, were calculated to trick me into saying something that wasn't true.

This man, the Inspector, is easy-going and easy to talk to. Trust me, Jimi, you would like him if you met him. Anyway, the answer I gave him was something like this:

"Jimi wakes up at 5:00am. We pray for like 15 minutes, and then he goes to take a bath, while I make his breakfast. Then, we eat together, and he goes to work at 6:00am to beat traffic. I don't leave for work until 7 or 7:30am because my office isn't far from the house. Jimi works on the Mainland too, but it takes about an hour to an hour and a half for him to get to work. He works from 8:00am to 5:00pm, and he usually comes home straight from work, unless he has to work late, or is meeting friends for drinks or has some other errands to run after work. He's usually home by 7:00pm or 8:00pm at the latest, and then we eat dinner together. After dinner, he reads the newspaper or watches TV and we go to bed around 10:00pm or 11:00pm. Then, we get up and do the same thing all over again, the next day."

But it was when he asked me to describe you, even though he had your pictures, including our wedding photos laid out in front of him that I started to tear up. I don't even know where the tears came from. I told him,

"Jimi is a kind-hearted, loving man, the sort of man who'd do anything to make me happy. He is very easy-going, friendly, focused. He worked as an IT consultant for a tech firm."

The next time Inspector Bobby came, my brother and sister had moved in with me and he asked a peculiar question:

"Are any of your husband's clothes missing?"

I didn't know the answer to that question, so Teju and I accompanied him to our bedroom, the master bedroom, and I naturally started searching your everyday clothes and I didn't see any that were missing or out of place, except for what you wore to work that morning: an orange shirt on light gray trousers and a matching gray tie with silver stripes.

That was your typical Monday morning ensemble, as I told him. But then, he asked me if you had bought any new clothes. That question puzzled me, but together we looked in the closet and drawers where you kept the new clothes we bought just 2 weeks before you went missing.

Not a single shirt or trouser, not even a belt buckle, could be found.

Jimi, it was at that point that for the first time I was forced to consider the possibility that maybe your disappearance was not an accident. Inspector Bobby reminded me that your colleagues did not see you at work on Monday. So, were you kidnapped between our home and the office? How could your disappearance be deliberate?

But, it was still just a possibility. We didn't have concrete proof: just theories and suppositions. Still, I found it strange. Our travelling bags and suitcases were still intact, and I didn't see you leave with anything other than your car keys that morning.

Then, the Inspector asked me where I thought your new clothes were, and I told him truthfully that I had no idea. Maybe you had given it away to charity or to your younger brother, though I couldn't imagine what your younger brother who's still in the university needs so many nice work clothes for.

Even the Inspector seemed dissatisfied with my answer.

It was after this discovery that I had a second dream.

Oh wait, I never even told you the first dream. Remember the first dream I mentioned in one of my earlier letters? I saw you standing in a forest and I kept calling you, but you never answered. You looked normal, exactly like you were that Monday morning. That dream was what told me that you were alive. It was nothing like the dreams I had when my grandmother passed.

But the second dream was more confusing. I saw you at the spot we both liked to visit: Ariya Gardens. And unlike the first dream, you spoke to me this time. Just two words:

"Find me."

It was like a cry for help, and I didn't know what to do. How could I find you when I didn't know where to look? And wasn't that what we had asked the Police to do? Even your family had put announcements in the newspapers, but no one had seen you. So, how was I supposed to succeed where they had all failed?

Of course, I didn't tell the Inspector about any of these dreams. I know how you men are with women and dreams; you just dismiss them, and say we have come again.

You, Jimi, I know you would explain this away as underlying fears infiltrating my subconscious and manifesting in my dreams. But, I know what I saw and it looked very real to me.

So, I told my friend, Kiki, and she told me not to overlook it.

"The good news is there's hope he's still alive. Just follow the trail and see where it leads." That was her advice, and I feel I won't be prejudiced by taking it to heart.

Tomorrow after church, I'll visit Ariya Gardens and even if I don't find anything, it'll be nice to get out of the house, and visit one of our favorite places.

Your Hopeful Wife,
Morenike

LETTER 7
A New Chapter

August 23, 1998

Dear Obajimi,

I have spent the past hour crying.

My younger ones have begged me to tell them what is wrong, but I've refused to say what I saw today. Ronke has telephoned my parents in Ibadan, and they're both on their way to Lagos as I write. And still, no one knows what I witnessed.

I feel that to keep myself from falling over the edge of this precipice of pain and heartbreak, I must pour out my heart onto these pages and let them bear the agony and the weight of my pain, before another living, breathing human being can hear this story.

Our assumptions were right: Obajimi, you're alive.

As real as this pen that struggles to make sense of the chaos in my head, as real as the hands you held the morning you left.

I was there at Ariya Gardens today, on a Sunday just like we used to do. I got there before 11:00am and was making my way slowly towards our special spot, that grove of trees that's like an oasis away from the noise of Lagos.

That's when I heard it: that laugh.

At first, I thought I was too wrapped up in longing for you to trust my own ears. Perchance, my mind had now tricked me into believing that the whisper of the wind between trees was my husband's laughter.

But I heard it again. And again and again, the spaces between filled by a lighter giggle.

I couldn't believe it. Was that my Jimi?

So, I approached carefully and listened again. Surely, there could be no mistaking that voice. Your voice. The deep baritone that had drawn you to me in the first place. How could I forget it?

But I still couldn't see anything or anyone. The voices were coming from behind those almond fruit trees with leafy branches under which we shared many a tête-à-tête. The owners of the garden had nicknamed that spot "The Lovers' Grove," and there was a white concrete bench under the trees.

I turned the corner. It was her I saw first, but she didn't see me. Her back was turned to me and she was busy planting kisses on your neck.

But you, you saw me. It was you I saw, Obajimi, my erstwhile missing husband, the man I had shed tears over and prayed for. It was you I saw in the arms of another woman.

And to think you denied it, you wretch! I confronted you, and you said I had the wrong person. You said that Obajimi was not your name and you had never seen me in your life. But I knew you were lying. You've always been a terrible liar. That thing you do where you keep rubbing the back of your head, while the free hand is firmly stuck in your pocket, was in overdrive that afternoon. You probably told her you bore another name because she kept calling you "Andrew."

I looked into your eyes, and I didn't see the eyes of a man under a spell. This was no jazz; you recognized me and yet told a blatant lie. And kept telling it.

You got up and dragged her away from there, apologizing to her for the embarrassment, while I, your wife, was standing there, calling you.

Obajimi. Is that really your name? Or is your name actually Andrew? What is the truth? Should I have followed you? Or just left you?

I followed you and found out where you're staying. A duplex on the other side of town. The old baba at the gate confirmed that both of you had moved in weeks before. To think that all this time, you've been living in this same Lagos.

How could so many people be looking for you, and yet you still remained hidden in this city?

There ends the mystery of your disappearance, Obajimi. But in celebrating the bitter-sweet joy of solving this mystery, many more questions have sprung up. Why did you do it? I mean, why did you go through so much trouble, using such an elaborate ruse, to abandon me, your wife? Did you ever love me? What about your parents and family? Didn't you care that they would be worried about you? Are you truly this heartless and selfish?

Obajimi, I want answers.

This letter will be mailed to you at your new address. If you like, destroy it. I will send copies to her at her workplace, and to all the worthless relatives whose scorn I have endured for your sake. You will give me answers, because I need closure. No, I demand answers.

You owe me that and much, much more.

I'm waiting ...

Your Heartbroken and Most Truly Betrayed Wife,
Morenike

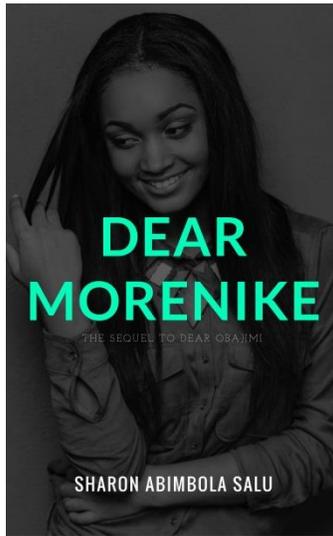
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**The Story Continues in
Dear Morenike, the Sequel ...**

* * *

Please enjoy the following Excerpt from Dear Morenike

DEAR MORENIKE



My New Abode
City of Lagos

September 9, 1998

Dear Morenike:

I warned you.

We both know the truth: this is not the first time I've left you. It has happened before, more than once, before we got married. The only difference is that this time, I'm not coming back.

You can't threaten me with sending so-called incriminating letters to my relatives. In fact, you shouldn't have said that because that door swings both ways. I can do the exact same thing: send this letter to all your relatives. But that's not my style. No. Firing personal letters to all corners of the globe so that anyone who can read will know why our marriage went south is not a Jimi move.

Which begs the question: why am I, Obajimi, writing you a letter? Here's the short answer: Morenike, you left me no choice.

You have gone everywhere, telling people that I abandoned you, labelling me as the villain in our story. If I am the villain, then that makes you the victim, right? That's not fair. It is not fair for people to jump to conclusions without ever hearing my side of the story. And that is one of the reasons why I am writing this letter to you.

DEAR MORENIKE Excerpt by Sharon Abimbola Salu © 2017

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THANK YOU FOR READING

I hope you enjoyed reading *Dear Obajimi*. The sequel, [Dear Morenike](#), is available on [SharonSalu.com](#), Amazon and other online retailers. Click [here](#) to grab your copy or search for “Dear Morenike” on Amazon and other online bookstores.

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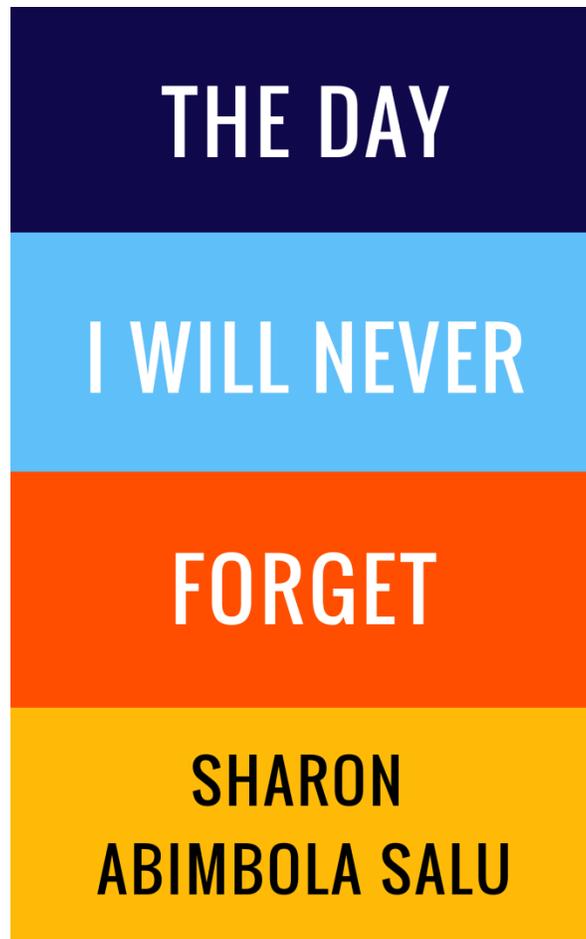
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Do you have a moment? Please review *Dear Obajimi* online. And if you just want to chat or say hello, you can e-mail me at sharonwritesfiction@gmail.com

Thanks again. I appreciate your support!

Keep reading for an excerpt from [The Day I Will Never Forget](#), available now.

THE DAY I WILL NEVER FORGET



We all knew about the rabbits. It was not a secret. Every student in my Primary 3 class – 5, 6, 7 year olds just like me – was aware that Miss Agbo, our class teacher, absolutely loved rabbits.

The first clue was the picture alphabet chart celotaped to one of the orange walls of our classroom. It was the first thing that caught your eye when you walked into class, an eruption of colors contrasting with the blackboard, which took up a sizeable portion of the wall in front of the class.

The presence of the alphabet chart was ironic; we were all well past the age of learning our A-B-Cs, and in fact, anyone who didn't know at age 6 that "A" was for "Apple" was considered a "D": Dunce. Or "O": Olodo, the more pathetic, local and certainly more humiliating term for a dunce. Borrowed from Yoruba, of course.

But what was a picture alphabet chart doing in a Primary 3 classroom?

Good question.

Now, that chart had once graced the walls of a nursery classroom. However, after some renovations and shuffling of classrooms to accommodate the rapidly growing student population,

or 'population explosion' as our headmaster often squealed during assembly in the morning, the Nursery 2 classroom, got converted to the Primary 3 classroom headed by Miss Agbo.

And that chart stayed behind.

For us, it was a constant reminder that we were not the first ones to colonize that room.

Or perhaps, it was a visual reminder that as young as we were, we had simply graduated from small children to older children.

The day I stepped into the classroom at the beginning of the first term, I noticed the chart for two reasons.

[READ THE FULL STORY](#)

About the Author

Sharon Abimbola Salu is the author of more than twenty short stories and novellas, mostly set in Nigeria. Her first published novel, **I Told Her Your Secret**, is a combination of her two favorite genres: mystery and romance. Sharon describes herself as a hopeful romantic and a lover of humor, writing the kinds of stories she would like to read. To read her stories, visit www.SharonSalu.com.

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