



Imolapake

"A TALE OF TWO FATHERS"

TOMI OKUNROUNMU

CHAPTER 1

“This could be it!” Gideon muttered under his breath as he read his mail. He found himself reading the email he had received from Soeron Capital International over again, as though it had mock questions.

His eyes rested on his screen

Dear Gideon Onah, your application for the job of Brand Strategist has been reviewed and we are glad to invite you to the next round of the screening. You are invited for an interview on Friday, 3rd April by 11am at the Soeron Towers Lekki Phase 1

Since the mail arrived on the 25th of March, the four words “This could be it” had become a kind of mantra for Gideon.

What a way to celebrate his twenty-seventh year on earth!

The giant clock in the reception chimed lightly, it was exactly 11:00 am. Not that it mattered. His nerves seemed calm in his estimation. *It's a good thing I avoided breakfast.* He felt jittery already, without adding the unnecessary heaviness that eating Michael's Jollof would bring

Upon his arrival at twelve minutes past ten, he had taken in the view of the reception. Like any edifice of great importance, nothing was out of place. The elegance was breathtaking. It spoke of a brand that had presence, class and history. It smelled old money, young blood. Most staff that walked around were millennials, Gideon wondered where the old dogs were.

Gideon waited patiently for his name to be called upon as the chair he sat on was cold yet enveloping. He had reread the mail several times since he received it, a part of him believed since it arrived on his Birthday; the job was his birthday gift. Not the mail, the job.

It was a tough life to seek for Job in Nigeria. He swiped the screen of his well-used smartphone to the left and opened his daily News app, read the updates. Nothing caught his fancy; well, save for the good thrashing Chelsea got from Manchester United the night before. He looked up as the receptionist's chirpy voice welcomed a man.

"You are welcome sir. Please, have your sit." She said. She pointed to a man in a lemon striped shirt towards the reception chairs where Gideon sat.

She called out "Mr. Gideon Onah", looking around as she waited for a reply. Upon sighting him, she said "Please, come."

Gideon walked towards the Receptionist's desk. The badge on her left breast pocket read Chioma.

Chioma had on a Brazilian weave, neatly styled with no strand out of place. She directed him towards a staircase "Take a walk up the stairs and turn right. The conference room is the first by the left. The door is labeled, quite easy to locate."

He smiled "Ok, ma'am."

Gideon located the room with ease just as the receptionist described. He took a deep breath just outside the conference room, adjusted his tie and dusted invisible specks of dust off his trousers. He remembered the day he passed out of the National Youth Service Corps scheme four years ago and for a moment he reminisced.

"Fours year after NYSC programme, geez... I can write a book on how hard it was to get a job. It has been interviews upon interviews. It's a wonder how people are

able to keep themselves together after years of seeking for job without succeeding.

It has even become so bad that every time I hear "We'd get back to you" I know to just keep searching. If things are so bad, it explains why people snake their way back into NYSC all because of the unpalatable situation of the country. Okay, so maybe it explains it, but it definitely doesn't justify it."

Gideon hissed, "After the hopes I had in uncles and aunties failed, I began to consider the possibility that God probably had something better up His sleeves, so I targeted news dailies for job offers. When there was not an apparent breakthrough, I decided to teach in a secondary school at least to make ends meet.

Even with the excess workload of taking three subjects; Mathematics, Economics and Physics, I loved being a teacher. Teaching was far away from my desired ambition

but I believe it was a way I could help young people reach their potentials. Still I have to reach mine...

Satisfied with his look, He put off his phone, said a quick prayer and knocked on the door.

Gideon sat at the table with his roommate and friend, Michael to eat dinner. Arsenal was pulling stunts over Liverpool. With Liverpool relenting, they seemed to be walking alone homewards.

Michael blessed the food and took a spoonful of beans porridge. He raised his head up, "Why is the yam so sweet?"

Gideon rolled his eyes, "Because it's not yam, silly, it is potato, sweet potato!"

"Nice, I like it" Michael paused "Who taught you?"

"I overheard a woman in the bus talk about how she got her children to start eating beans by adding little slices of

sweet potatoes". He shrugged.

"Eavesdropper" Michael continued eating. "But wait o, does that mean she has to wait for every potato season before she can feed her children with beans?"

"I didn't remember to ask that" Gideon made a funny face. "But whatever, my mother didn't give room for such. She will instantly tell you to go and drink Garri if you can't eat what she has to offer."

"Forget, children these days can be bossy. Sometimes they try to control their parents." Michael quipped in anyway, "About the rent, the Landlord said he needs his balance as soon as it's August."

"Sure thing Mike, God will provide." Gideon tried to sound calm and reassuring.

Michael hissed and with a quizzical look, he said, "Guy I know, But how do we give him cash and not prayers?" He

answered the question himself, "By giving him cash." And ate from his spoon.

"I had an interview today" Gideon stated, changing the topic abruptly.

"I see. But, you didn't mention to me that you had one scheduled for today." Michael made a face at him.

"Well, I didn't want to get your hopes high."

"So, how did it go?"

"It went well. I am hopeful."

* * * *

"You should go home" Morinsola said as she switched on the lights.

Omolabake looked up from her table. "You startled me"

Omolabake said. "I didn't notice you walking in."

Morinsola smiled and walked towards the window. "Girl, you were so engrossed with whatsoever you were doing that you didn't hear me knock" she walked away from the window.

At almost few metres away from her, Morinsola's cyan dress still had the glow it held in the morning. "You said something?" Omolabake asked Morinsola, her friend and colleague.

Morinsola took her sit on the lounge chair close to the window. "It's past six, girl. Office hours ended about an hour ago, you should go home"

"Sure, I will... after I fill out those forms." She pointed at a folder adjacent her Laptop device. "And why are you still around?"

"I am chilling for the husband to come oh..." Her dimples were evident as she rolled her eyes "He asked me not to go home, he made plans already."

Omolabake giggled "Awwn, so romantic."

"Yes o, let me keep enjoying my honeymoon o." Morinsola sighed.

"I see, honeymoon! After all these years? Remind me, which supermarket you purchased your husband?"

“He was pre-ordered o, limited edition.” Morinsola giggled.

“Do you think I will be a good mother?”

Startled, Omolabake looked up from the form she was filling. “Where is that coming from, Love?”

Her face brightened “Hormones, I guess.”

“They had better be. I know you are a worrier and you need to stop. Because, you are also a warrior too; you will overcome the challenges in a little while and, I know you’d make a terrific mother.” She chuckled.

“Ehen en, this is a serious vote of confidence.” Her phone buzzed. “I hope you are really good Omolabake? How’s your beau, Felix? Hope no troubles?” Morinsola had only met Omolabake’s boyfriend twice. First time was in passing. The second time was not long enough for her to decide if she actually liked him.

“No, we are good” Omolabake waved her off.

“Alright, I’d be off.” She waved her phone in the air. “My ride is here.”

“Ok babe, by the way, you look beautiful.”

“Thanks. Let’s find out what husband thinks.”

Omolabake laughed at her friend’s vivaciousness.

Morinsola gave her best as the Head of Human Resources at Soeron. It was more of a gift than a qualification.

Everyone at the office made her a friend. Her phone buzzed, signaling an incoming message.

She tapped in her password and opened the message. It was Felix. She read out aloud the text “We are done...”

“What kind of a fool breaks up over text messages” she wondered. Such a spineless creature. Felix was everything but without the senses. I should be the one breaking up with him and not vice versa.” She hissed “I caught him cheating on me, with that riff raff.”

“Have a nice life, moron.” She said out loud as she replied him without feeling bad. “Good riddance”

She hit the intercom for her Driver.

“Tell Stanley to come up I am ready to leave.”

CHAPTER 2

“What’s your view about romantic affairs in the workplace?” The interviewer asked him.

“It’s wrong to allow personal affairs affect one’s efficiency at work. But after work, can one not really help who he falls in love with?” Gideon asked rhetorically.

The interviewer didn’t flinch. Not even a move of eyebrow or a smile to give her away. He wasn’t so sure his answer sat well with her.

Seconds of silence passed, she asked “Do you have other commitments that may require your time or attention while at work?”

“None that can’t be postponed till after work or attended to during lunch.”

"Can you drive?"

"Yes ma'am..." As an afterthought, he added "with experience of eight years."

"Alcohol?"

"I don't drink, zero tolerance towards it."

"Any wife and kids?" she asked.

"None for now."

Gideon wondered if the woman had at all read his resume.

"Your interests?"

"I play the guitar once in a while, reading and writing mostly. I like cars too etc."

Her eyes lit up instantly, "Let's talk cars."

"*Finally, a common ground*" he sighed within himself. She loved cars, obviously.

"My husband and I can't get enough of cars..." she talked excitedly as though all along she was waiting for a change in the subject.

"Well, I like to think of the engines."

"Nice, He just got us a car."

"Model?" He asked

"Toyota Venza limited edition 2017."

"Wow... the colour?" Gideon asked, hoping he was not being too forward.

"It came in magenta" she hissed. "I wonder who did that to the poor baby."

Gideon laughed. "You are funny ma'am, so what colours would you prefer?"

Dreamy eyed, she said "Well for a start, "Black, sleek black or Blue Royal. He painted it already."

"That's nice to hear."

"So, what's your dream car?"

"Hum... tough call. Well, a hybrid electric vehicle like Range Rover Sport 2018."

"You definitely know what you want. Modern sophistication with class. " She smiled and glanced at her wristwatch, he

looked across the room at the wall clock he sighted when he entered the conference room. The time was fifteen minutes to twelve.

Still smiling, she looked up and said "You should hear from us pretty soon. By the way it was fun talking cars."

"Same here, ma'am". He received the hand she extended for a handshake.

"You may take your leave" She scribbled into her notepad. Two weeks and counting, all Gideon had left was the pleasant memory of his unpredictable interview at Soeron Capital International.

* * * *

Omolabake Ibikunle-Pearse, heiress of the famous Ibikunle-Pearse fortune grew up having her way. Whatever she wanted, she got. No one could do anything about that. It was one of the best part of being the only child of Business tycoon and Billionaire extraordinaire, Otunba

K.K.K. Ibikunle-Pearse.

Perhaps that explained why Morinsola did not have a hard time comprehending how her friend had changed drivers at least four times. And on top of that, within the space of sixteen months! Even for the HR, her friend's behavior was frustrating and causing some stir.

Stanley, she complained wanted to be his own boss.

Omolabake had said he didn't listen to her when she asked him not to take certain routes. And there had been Mr. AZ, who she said did not have much intelligent conversation up his sleeves.

"What's with these returnees from America and their uncanny demand for attention?" Morinsola rolled her eyes as she uncovered the lid of Mountain dew bottle. *"Could Omolabake be suffering from Entitlement syndrome?"*

She smiled at the obvious fact. *"Omolabake is naive. The labour market wasn't smiling."* She thought to herself.

“Stop plotting against me, Sherlock” Omolabake broke into her thoughts

Morinsola gulped in her fizzy drink and smiled at her friend across the table “Omolabake, if you know how difficult to secure a job in the labour market is, you won’t be like this.”

“Yeah, right! Tell me; don’t they get paid for doing their job?”

Morinsola smiled. “*No point arguing with you, girl.*” she thought. “So what exactly do you want, Labake?” she asked, almost losing her patience.

“Well, someone exciting enough. If I will spend a lot of time in the car which I do then I need it to be a haven, my haven. Someone who speaks English, please. Who is smart enough to churn out ideas, my car must be bubbling with intelligent discussions, the person should at least, have an idea about ideas. It is my space.” she chatted.

Morinsola rolled her eyes.

"I see! So what exactly do you want from me?" Morinsola asked this time, the creasing on her brows couldn't be missed.

"I want you to specifically do the job and not the Directorate of Transportation assigning me a driver?"

"Oh" silently escaped Morinsola's lips. As reality dawned in she burst into laughter. "I see".

"You can help, right? I'm sure I can count on you, Morin" Omolabake threw her friend an air kiss.

"Let me think about it." Morinsola shook her head as she tried to eat her cold tuna sandwich.

* * * *

Gideon sat at his table meditating on the words he had typed on his blog. He enjoyed the midnight light; the power distribution company chose to be loyal at odd hours. His jotter lay by his side full of illegible doodles.

"Hey Mike! How was your day?" Gideon asked not looking

up. As Michael hung the shirt he had just ironed into the wardrobe.

"Was ok... I made a friend, seems cool" he sat on the brown settee adjacent the table.

"I'm all ears."

He pulled a matching tie from the tie rack. Michael liked to prepare his ties along with his shirts. So he'd knot them on Sunday evening and place each on the preferred shirt.

"Well, she is the secretary to the Deputy Director. She is fun to be with and pretty intelligent."

"Oh, be careful though. Office romance should not be the next on your agenda" Gideon warned.

"Nah, don't get so worked up! There is absolutely no reason to worry about that."

"So guess what? "Gideon typed for a while.

"You have a date?" Michael guessed

"Yes, I do!"

"Who is she?" ...

“Well, the company has asked me to come for discussion tomorrow. They might have an offer for me.”

“Guy, take it oo... which discussion again.” Michael hissed.

“Hum, we’ll see.”

* * * *

“You’re welcome, Mr.Onah”

The secretary to the Human Relations Officer called up to him and said “You may go in. The HR will see you now.”

He stood up and straightened his tie.

“Good morning ma’am”, he greeted. He met the woman who had interviewed him few weeks earlier.

“Yes, you’re welcome. Do have your seat.” She replied.

Gideon silently surveyed the desk. It had a customized mug, a Samsung tablet, a Laptop of HP Pavilion model and stacks of folders. She stepped away from the shelf from which she pulled out a file. He scanned the room; there was a vase of fresh flowers that made the office look

adorable. The Television was on, but muted. Her office kind of matched her personality; calm and straight to the point. He couldn't place a finger on it; it was as though one can only see what she wanted to be seen.

She had on a beautiful lemon floral dress and rose-rimmed cat-eye spectacles.

"Mr. Gideon, I called you here in person to relate this news to you." She paused. "I specifically chose not to have a text message sent to you.

"Ok" *That's a good sign right?* He thought.

"You see, the job of the Brand Communication Strategist you applied for has been filled". Feeling disappointed, he replied slowly

"Thank you ma, I understand." With a bit of a smile on his face

She continued, "However, I feel I can tell you this. There is an opening."

"Ok..." *What have I done to find such favour as this?*

Gideon wondered.

"Hum... We need a Driver..." She said bluntly.

Gideon gulped in air, he was taken aback. As what she said sank in, he found his lips rounding to voice out an amused "Oh."

She continued "And you have all it takes, actually you are... "Overqualified". She stammered.

"I see." Gideon answered forcibly.

"Would you consider it? Bearing in mind that there could be another job opening soon and you will be at an advantage to re-apply from within the company?"

"Ok" was all he could say.

"So, what do you say?" She smiled.

Surprising himself, he asked "How long do I have to think about it?"

She looked at her watch. "You have till 9am tomorrow morning. Then I'd have to put out an advert."

"Ok... thank you ma."

He stood up to leave. He shook her hand and walked out in a daze.

* * * *

“So, who is that guy that almost tripped me down just outside your office?” Omolabake shook her head as she took her seat. “A guy, he had on a blue t-shirt with a striped wine tie” she continued as she placed their lunch on the table. Theirs was a routine. Lunch time was their time. The café was unusually bustling for a Monday.

“That dude is probably your driver.” Morinsola made a face.

“Nice!” Omolabake opened her salad and poured it on her rice.

“I felt really sad breaking the news to him. I mean his pride must have been hurt.”

“Please, please, please, Mother Nature. Is it by force, won’t he be paid?” She hissed.

“What happened to your heart?” She paused. “Wait, what’s up with Felix?”

Omolabake dropped the spoon that was midway into her mouth “Kini gan, will you let me eat in peace?”

“Someone’s in a mood...” Morinsola frowned “When were you planning to tell me?”

“So you can do what, beg him for me?” Labake hissed.

Morinsola stood up. “We will have this conversation when your senses return. It seems they left with him.” She walked away, leaving her favourite Tuna salad.

Omolabake hissed. It annoyed her so much that her friend could read her like a book.

Thank you for reading a bit of Omolabake

Omolabake would be out this June, send a mail to

Lutomiokuns@gmail.com to pre-order a hard copy of the book

at #1,500

And follow my Facebook Page Lutomi Modesola for interesting updates.