

Adéniké

Her Story
Your Movie
His Glory



A D E N I K E O Y E T U N D E

Adéniké

Her Story
Your Movie
His Glory



ADENIKE OYETUNDE



ADENIKE
HER STORY, YOUR MOVIE, HIS GLORY

Copyright © 2018 by Adenike Oyetunde

All Rights Reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, without permission.

For information address all correspondence to me@adenikeoyetunde.com

FIRST EDITION

Printed in Nigeria

Designed by Victory James Ugwudike
Layout by Witts & Stratts
Cover Photography by Anny Roberts
Backpage Photography by Olanrewaju Ali
for Kasamyrrh Studios

ISBN 978-978-969-310-8

YOU'RE ABOUT TO READ THE STORY OF A YOUNG GIRL WHOSE LIFE'S TRAJECTORY CHANGED ONE FATEFUL DAY OWING TO A FALL AND IS STILL EVOLVING. You're going to walk with her through her denial, strength, resilience, confusion, pain, tears, brokenness, surrender, and freedom. You'll see her finding herself, coming into her own, fighting for her life. You'll dream her dreams and read about determination.

In this book, Adenike invites you to read through the actions that have continued to change her life.

Content

<i>Forward</i>	vii
<i>Introduction</i>	xii
.....	
CHAPTER ONE	19
Let's Start At The Beginning	
.....	
CHAPTER TWO	97
My New Reality	
.....	
CHAPTER THREE	131
Of Processes and Looking	
To The Future	
.....	
CHAPTER FOUR	157
Finding God	

CHAPTER FIVE	173
Purpose	
.....	
CHAPTER SIX	183
Through Their Eyes	
.....	
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	220
.....	
THE GRATITUDE JAR	222

Foreword

ADENIKE DASOLA OYETUNDE IS A REMARKABLE YOUNG WOMAN. I cannot find words in the English language to demonstrate my admiration and love for this lady. We all know that typically, the last-born in a home is adored and indulged, sometimes spoilt. They receive the least amount of discipline and get presents from everyone. Doors open for them. They don't have the burden of responsibilities as other children do and have more freedom to be whoever they want to be. I am speaking very generally, but I would imagine that in your network of family and friends, you know one person like this. You might even be the last-born.

Adenike is one of God's last-born children, one of those children that are favoured and indulged. I look at her and think, *Ahn, ahn, only Adenike?*

The Adenike I know has never had to worry about what to wear, where to sleep, or what to eat.

The Adenike I know finds favour with practically everyone she meets. The Adenike I know is warm, kind and thoughtful. She always has a smile, but most of all, she is strong. Adenike is so strong.

This strength does not come from her inside; it comes from her ability to curl up in her Father's arms. When she is happy, she turns to Him and says thank you. When she is sad, she runs to Him and cries. She rests in His palm as He carries her on this journey through life. She has shown me how she walks with God and I am privileged to bear witness to the goodness of God in her life.

Authentic vulnerability is one of Adenike's superpowers. What you see is what you get: beautiful imperfection with the most radiant smile. Through her story, you can learn to cultivate this gift in your own life, nurture it and watch how your world transforms, for we were made to be authentically vulnerable.

We're not strong because we put on a brave face. We are strong when we admit our weaknesses, our pain and our struggles without letting them define or limit us. Humanity is beautiful in its frailty, in the struggles and in how we rise, how we defiantly survive, thrive and embrace this one life we have to live.

In the pages of this book, you will go on a journey of the story of her life. Honestly, can one's life be whittled down to 224 pages? Can the essence of every moment, every emotion, every significant turning point truly be captured? 32 years, 384 months, 11,688 days, over 280,000 hours, 16 million minutes captured in one book? And this is just time.

In a person's life, there are the milestones, defining moments that shape us and the world around us. Then there are the

several infinitely small moments, those small steps that lead up to the defining moments. Sometimes, we notice these moments, the coincidences that lead us into divine timing. Everyone has that one day when they woke up and made a decision different from the norm, and something significant happened. But how many more of those moments go unnoticed.

Adenike asks, why did she go home that weekend? Why did she decide to fetch water? As you read this part of her story, think about the million small moments in your life that lead to the big defining moments that perhaps, you never noticed.

One thousand pages would not be enough to capture 16 million moments of significance that make Adenike the person she is, much less the few pages in this book. Let me digress for a moment and share the story of a 5ml bottle of rose oil.

Essential oils are produced by plants and perform a variety of functions within the plant. For instance, the oils in the plant attract herbivores that help the plant reproduce. They also ward off unfriendly pests, fight off environmental threats, and even allow the plant to heal itself if physically injured. Plants only produce small amounts of oil: just 1–5 percent of a plant's total composition. It takes 242,000 rose petals to produce 5ml of rose oil. The amazing thing about essential oil is that when used, you only need one drop or two for the day. It has to be consumed in small doses.

Why did I use rose oil specifically? It is used to fight depression, treat wounds, help you breathe better, and protect

against viruses. It's the fragrance for lovers and has many more health benefits.

The days and hours of Adenike's life are like several rose petals distilled into a 5ml vial of rose oil for your consumption. We start with the joy and whimsy of childhood and family life. Thereafter, we proceed to the rascally adventures of a plucky, young girl. We see this young girl grow up into a young woman, with hopes and dreams, the same dreams that you and I have. We see one small moment change the course of a lifetime and witness as Adenike takes the decision to live life to the fullest and dream even bigger dreams.

Like the rose oil, there are proper uses and guidelines that enable us gain full benefit from its properties. What you get out of this book depends on how involved your heart is in the process of reading. Would these words just be words on a page, a good read about the life of an ordinary extraordinary young woman, or would you allow the words to inspire you? Would you allow her pain to connect with your pain? Would you allow her hope give you a reason to hope? Would you open your heart to embracing life with the fierceness Adenike does?

I've tried to distill the key essential values that represent Adenike's life:

Adenike lives a life of gratitude and honour. She never forgets who she is, where she came from and is truly thankful for every one of these 16 million minutes of her life.

Adenike loves God and loves people. Love defines her.

Love strengthens her. Love gave her a reason to live. And love propels her to stand for justice and transform the society in which we all live.

Adenike dares to dream. We all have this one life to live. We do not have control over the cards we are dealt, but we can control how we choose to deal with life. Adenike has chosen to dream big and reach for the stars. When you finish reading this book, ask yourself, what choices will you make for your own life?

Olusola Adeola

Introduction

ADENIKE DASOLA OYETUNDE WAS BORN ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 1986, TO ADELANI AND BUKOLA, WHOSE NAMES, INCIDENTALLY, I RECENTLY TATTOOED ON MY SKIN. They have no idea that the plan was to tattoo their names so that it calms them down when I add other tattoos! *Shh, don't tell them. I'm hoping they miss this part while reading this book!*

My parents are amazing people. My mum is the life of any party, the 'shouter' who is calming down with age. She is the one who doesn't know how to verbally express love but readily talks about and shows it. It's not alien for her to go to the ends of the earth to prove that she loves you. My dad has always been my best friend and greatest cheerleader, which has earned him the best dad award. I remember that sometimes, he'd call me to report my mum, and I'd calm him down. Later, I'd end up calling him to report her too, and he'd calm me down! Let's just say we are a tag team.

Growing up, I didn't come from a well-to-do home. I never travelled abroad for summer holidays, even though I wish I had that privilege. My first time on a plane was in 2009 when I flew to Houston-Texas for a new prosthetic limb. How I got that limb without paying a dime is a story of faith. It is a story of cancer; a story where I fall, rise, fall again, yet keep rising.

This is the story of Adenike, unscripted, open to the world.

This is my story.

“I like how real and vulnerable she is in this book. There is a teaspoon of hope (perhaps more) for anyone who reads it. I am excited about the impact it will have on its readers and the ripple effect of love, hope, friendship, family and the love of God that will spread as a result. Adenike’s book is a story of hope, faith, strength, family and friendship. Her book contains a little bit of something that makes us reflect on our lives and the society we live in. It also reminds us that as long as there is life, there is hope. I have waited a bit to see this finished and I just can’t wait to see it out there in the hands and hearts of many. Some of the things she shared really hit home for me and I know that many others will feel the same way.”

Remi Owadokun

Adenike's years on radio, her public appearances, and social media platforms have made her a familiar figure. She is very open about being an amputee and the fact that she is firmly rooted in God. This book takes what we think we know about this amazing woman to another level. She leaves her heart and soul on these pages, seemingly leaving nothing back. We are taken on a journey from her mischievous tomboy persona during her childhood to her university days to being diagnosed with cancer and the journey from denial to acceptance, and finally, victory. This is not just a book you read; it's a book you feel.

Uzo Orimalade

Creative Director, Uzo's Food Labs

This book references Adenike's ability to find strength in pain and echoes her ability to help others push until they become the best version of themselves. It shows how she's fallen, picked herself up, fallen yet again, and through Christ, is rising

This book touches every important episode of her still-evolving life. She's a great example to many people.

Through this book, Adenike shows how her life couldn't be limited by the loss of her limb. Despite not being familiar with some details in this book, I've always described Adenike as "hand-icapABLE." She still is. There are many lessons to be learnt from Adenike's life choices and experiences. It is also highly commendable that she was able to find Christianity at an early age and get a go-ahead from her parents to embark on the journey of knowing and having faith in Christ.

Adenike's story isn't that of struggle; it's one where she has the constant belief that with God all things are possible. This is evident in her ability to use her life experiences to tell others of the love of God for all. According to her, God is always in a good mood!

Take it from me; Adenike is really God at work.

A copy of this book for yourself and other copies for friends and family won't be a bad idea.

It's MY bestseller.

Lawal Sherif A.

Broadcast Journalist

As you can imagine, I get through a number of books at a time—either for pleasure or just to learn the art of better writing. I was already in the middle of two very amazing novels when I decided to take a peek at your book, with the plan to get back to it after my novels. You can imagine my surprise when I could not put it down. From your birth to the travails endured as you battled cancer, your story completely absorbed my being. I was awed by your resilient spirit, your optimistic attitude to life, and your refusal to allow sickness claim your life through your solid faith. What a journey your life has been on. What a privilege to read your story!

The prayers you included are so real, so unpretentious, they could only have come from God.

Your experiences in the US—everything God did and how you have completely come to trust in Him—challenged and moved me.

This is a book that will stay with me for a long, long time.

Thank you for sharing it with the world and with me.

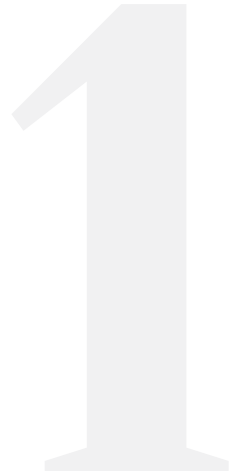
The world awaits you, Adenike, I tell you. God has just started with you. Stand still, and see His salvation, glory, power, and light shine upon you so that you can continue to shine upon the world.

Abimbola Dare

Author

CHAPTER ONE

Let's Start From The Beginning



LIFE BEFORE ADENIKE

MY MOTHER ALWAYS DREAMT OF HAVING FOUR OR FIVE CHILDREN LIKE HER MOTHER. That dream stayed with her as she entered marriage. However, after two years without a child, she realized that something was wrong. She prayed all she could and how best she knew. It took another two years—four years in total after marriage—for her to get pregnant. It was then that my dad revealed a secret to her.

During one of their numerous trips to the doctor, he had found out that her fallopian tubes were blocked. Apparently, only a miracle could change things. Not wanting to scare her, he had hidden the infertility diagnosis from her. When my mum informed him that she was pregnant, he knew I was a miracle, a child with a call on my life to prove doubters wrong. My parents believe that I came as an answer to prayers; to

them, I was a symbol of hope. Mother called me a child of purpose brought to wipe tears from not just their eyes but from the eyes of those I'd meet throughout my life.

My mother was relieved when she had me; she was tired of the pressure from society. My dad, on the other hand, did not care much about what anybody thought. He simply wanted whatever made my mum happy. He was one of those men who knew he had met the woman he was going to marry the minute he was introduced to her. Seeing as he was a calm person, she was the *action lady* he knew he needed. According to him, one of the things that drew him to her was her enterprising spirit—she was very resourceful. Aside from having all these traits and more, he truly loved her. Thus when he found out that they could not have a child, it did not deter him from staying married.

WHO ARE THEY?

Bukola Victoria Oyetunde is my burst of energy. She is my Mrs I-Cannot-Stay-Still-For-Too-Long, my Mrs You-Cannot-Cheat-Me-And-Get-Away-With-It, and my Mrs Let's-Sell-Anything-To-Make-Legitimate-Money. She is my resourceful mother, and as I get older, friend. She's the epitome of selflessness, the one who reaches into the depth of her being to help others. Adelani Olalere Oyetunde is my jéjé l'aiyé

(peaceful) man, my Mr Read-Everything-Readable and Mr History-Lessons. He is my one-time best friend and dad; he has shown me the true meaning of love. Once, I remember him offering me money for new shoes when he was broke. When I noticed that his only pair of slippers was badly worn, I refused to take the money. That day, I wept after he looked at me and said, “I’d rather wear my rags and see you happy.” I have seen him help countless people and still marvel when people who had dealings with him before I was born show up to thank him. He is a true leader who has shown the real meaning of integrity.

NEVER ALONE

My earliest memories of childhood start from when I was about five or six. Back then, I liked to play and often hurt myself. Once, things got so bad that I was rushed home because I was bleeding profusely from a cut on my lower leg.

Before leaving home that day, my mum had warned me not to go play football, but I didn’t listen.

For some reason, I thought my mum would rush to my aid because I was bleeding. Instead, she asked the domestic help to boil some water. Ordering me to sit beside her, she dipped a towel into the hot water and pressed it against the wound. The first time I screamed, she stuffed part of the hot

towel in my mouth. When she was done cleaning the injury, she opened tetracycline capsules and emptied the contents on the wound. I screamed again. I still don't know the medical composition of that capsule, but we used it every time there was an injury—and that was most of the time.

After that episode, you would have thought Adenike would avoid playing football. Y'all thought wrong. Yes, I had an injury and couldn't actively play, but by the second or third week when the injury started healing, my patience started wearing thin. Soon, I was bored and couldn't wait to return to my football routine with the boys. My mum warned me *again* not to play football, but I refused to listen. The first time I sneaked out, I played as the goalkeeper, which, at least, was less strenuous.

There are a million and one stories about how playful I was. Sometimes, it seemed like my excesses were tolerated because I was the only child; there was usually no one to play with. To compensate me, my parents usually had people come over to our home. Other times, they allowed me to spend holidays with family and friends. However, as much as I wanted to play and have fun, there were boundaries I wasn't allowed to cross.

I remember a time when my mum beat me because I got home late. "I don't know how a child will never know when to come back home! It's only you that will go to people's homes and not know to return to yours," she yelled, as her hands hit the target: me. I didn't understand why she was beating

me as I had just been upstairs at our neighbour's. I thought to myself, *If you wanted to see me, you could've just called my name. Like, if you had gone outside and called for me, I would've heard you, mummy.* But, of course, I never could say all those things; they were just in my head. You dared not talk back to my mother.

My mischief continued throughout primary school. Of all fading memories from my younger years, one incident in Primary Four stands out. During the third term, I was 16th in a class of about 36 pupils. The previous term, I was 5th and had promised my mum that I would do better. Clearly, the drop from 5th to 16th proved otherwise. Immediately I got my report card, I knew I was in huge trouble, one that probably involved me being *flogged to death*. As I loved life and was hell-bent on living until I was over a hundred, I devised a plan: first, I used an eraser to clean the "6" but then I realized that leaving the "1" would've meant I was first. There was no way my mother would believe that, as my cumulative average was too low for such a claim. I erased the "1" and left the "6" instead. It's important to say here that my class teacher had filled my card using a blue pen; all I did was try to clean it with an eraser. To date, I don't know what inspired me to come up with such an idea as everything looked an awful mess when I finished. A better plan would have been to use Tipp-Ex.

Imagine my relief when I handed my report card to my mum and she said nothing. I was elated, over the moon that my plan worked. Somehow, it did not occur to me that

my mother was not one to be silent over a good report card. She waited for my dad to get back and showed him his darling daughter's result. I was somewhere doing something I cannot remember, but best believe that I was beyond startled when my dad yelled, "Abike! What happened?" Abike is my *oriki*—my traditional praise name. Back then, my dad called me that when I was acting silly or when he was commending me. This time, I could not place what it was. At this point, I'd love to say that I escaped being beaten, but that'd be a lie. It's a miracle that my mother's beating didn't leave scars. While beating me, she asked how I could have thought they'd be fooled. My mum knew that my class was very competitive and that my cumulative average was not good enough to have claimed I was first or sixth. I still don't know why I thought it was an awesome idea to erase the '1' and act like I was sixth. When I think back, I believe that FEAR fueled that action—it was all fear! I wasn't raised to discuss failure, didn't even know how to deal with it. It was either success or nothing. In hindsight, I wish I was taught the basics of life and how failing is a huge part of that.

When my mum punished me, she did it with not only her hands but also with her mouth. Sometimes I'd think, *Just beat me already, let's get it over with!* but my mum would talk and talk. If you did something wrong on a Tuesday, my mum would talk on Tuesday. She'd continue when you returned from school on Wednesday. You wake up on Thursday morning, and she'd

still talk—as well as on Friday. When you thought my mum had forgotten—perhaps, on Sunday, as you’re prepping for the new week—my mum would still talk. I used to play outside for long hours just so I wouldn’t come home to hear her talk. Other punishments were preferable to her talking.

As strict as my mother was, she also pampered me when she wanted to. She sold drinks, and one the ways she made me feel special was by giving me drinks. I had access to all the drinks I could think of. I kind of garnered popularity amongst my peers – at least, in my mind – because of my mum’s business; everyone knew the woman who sold drinks at Moseley Road in Ikoyi. If there was a new drink in town, Nike’s mum had it, Nike knew it, and Nike had tasted it.

My family lived on Moseley Road. At first, I attended Rhodes Nursery International School (RNIS) owned by Mrs Rhoda Ogunye. From RNIS, I later moved to Command Children’s Primary School, Bonny Camp, Victoria Island.

I would call myself a curious and self-entertaining child, very active in school, too (there’s no need claiming that I was the smartest kid in class). Growing up, I had promised myself that I would not be that adult who always claimed to have excelled well academically, as many of our parents did. Back then, you could find me when it came to activities like dance or drama. I guess I was so good that most times, I led the team. Once, in Primary Four, I recall playing the role of a doctor. My mum made me a robe and even got me the whole

medical set—I had the stethoscope, Band-Aids, cotton balls, and bandages. It was beautiful!

In Primary Four, for the first and only time ever, I had a family friend in my class whose name is also Nike, short for Oyenike. We were so chatty that our class teacher asked a boy to sit between us. Fifteen years later, at an event in Lagos, a young man walked up to me and introduced himself as the boy who was made to sit between the two Nikes. I was in utter shock. Do not give my memory much credit as I did not remember this part of the story until I met him. Kudos to you, gentleman. Thank you for reaching out to me. He reminded me about Primary Four again. It was such a beautiful time. We had been studying hard even though our parents were still contemplating whether we should attempt the entrance examination into secondary school at such a young age.

I was six when I first discovered Christianity. A family that often visited us stands out in my memory as being responsible for my introduction to Christianity. Whenever the Ajagbes came over, their younger children would tell me about Sunday School and all the fun they were having at Ikoyi Baptist Church where they attended. For me, the bible stories and meals were the biggest attraction, and one day I decided to tell my dad about this place I had heard so much about. I told him I wanted to attend church, too! Even though my father was Muslim, he was comfortable with the idea of me going to church. He rarely objected to anything I wanted to do as

long as it was morally right, I was obedient, wasn't making trouble, wasn't injured, and no one was hurting me.

His consent marked the beginning of my journey into Christianity. I also summoned the courage to tell my parents that I also wanted to go to the church's summer school. At summer school, we not only read Bible stories but also did academic work. My dad loved the exposure I got from interacting with the other kids whose lifestyles I admired so he wholeheartedly gave his permission. They realized that I loved it so much that threatening to stop me from attending church became the new way to ensure I behaved myself. Twice, after throwing a tantrum, my dad threatened to enrol me at an Arabic school on Ruxton Road. The thought of stopping terrified me as I had become hooked on the whole church experience. Those times, I would promise to be a good girl and actually behave better—both at home and in school—and he would relent.

In Primary Five, I attempted the National Common Entrance Examination which is the entrance examination into secondary schools in Nigeria. Mum didn't want me to stay in primary school until Primary Six, so she enrolled me as an external pupil in a public primary school in Ikoyi. That way, I could take the exams a year earlier. I explicitly remember the examination day; she packed so much food. The sandwiches were so tasty, and there was *Tandi Guarana*, the drink of the moment. Of course, my parents went with me to the examination centre. When the results were released, I didn't do so

well, and my mum was disappointed. She immediately found a way to reference what had happened when I changed my grades and claimed that that was certainly the genesis of my poor performance. I was taken aback as to how both events were related. Surprisingly, I gained admission into Queen's College (QC), Yaba, Lagos with the same result.

PASSING ON THE TORCH

My admission to Queen's College did not come easy. My common entrance result could not get me on the merit list to Queen's College, so I had to wait for the supplementary list. Throughout the period I stayed at home, my mum tried to get my dad who once worked at the Ministry of Education to pull a few strings on my behalf. "What's the problem? You're not going to bribe anyone; you're simply pulling a favour card!" she said, but my dad did not budge. He was and still is a firm believer in meritocracy and due process.

As he did not believe in pulling rank to expedite my admission, I stayed home waiting for the supplementary list. I didn't start secondary school until the first week in December when it was almost time for first term examinations. While I waited, my family friend, Oyenike Ajagbe, had already resumed at Queens' College. I'd go to her house, get her notes, copy, and read them; that way, I already had an idea of what was

going on in school. I remember looking at her Introductory Technology notebook and having to draw incomprehensible things. Finally, on December 2, 1996, I resumed at Queen's College, Lagos.

As a welcome gift, I got punished alongside the entire school the very next day. Nollywood star, Richard Mofe Damijo, had visited our all-girls school and, yes, there was chaos. I did not even know when he arrived as I kept wondering why so many girls were running towards the front gate. I only found out what was going on when I was some meters from the gate myself – I was shocked to see some girls taking off their blouses! You can imagine how hurt I was when the next day on the assembly ground, our then principal Mrs A.J Marinho, expressed her disgust at our unruly behaviour and punished us all. We knelt until noon that day. Without a doubt, I knew I was in for interesting times at Queen's College. The next six years of my life were amazing. Rest on Marie Theresa Sojirin, my principal.

In JSS 3, we moved to Badore, Ajah, in the Eti- Osa East Local Government Area of Lagos State. Commuting from Badore to Sabo, Yaba, where my school was, became a hassle. I had to move in with the Ajagbes who lived at the 1004 Housing Estate in Victoria Island. I returned home every weekend, and after a few weeks, the trips took a toll on me; I was constantly tired. The good thing is that the stress only eased up after I moved into the boarding house in SS1.



1004 felt like home. When there was no power, you'd get stuck in the elevator; that was always scary. You bet my first option was always to use the stairs.

I didn't have siblings, but I always knew that whatever happened, I'd always have my friend, Oyenike. We were almost born at the same time, and our dads had been very good friends as bachelors. We also had many things in common and did almost everything together. We wore the same style of clothes and hairstyles, and used the same kind of school supplies; we even attended the same primary and secondary school.

I never actually felt the impact of being an only child until I went to boarding house and watched my new friends who had large families. One visiting day, during my senior secondary days, I waited to see my dad, but was disappointed when no one came to see me. Seeing a classmate's family chatting, her sisters and her mother bursting with so much excitement, I felt empty and broken for the first time. At that point, I hated being an only child. I wished that I had siblings who'd visit me—just for that purpose and nothing more. But then again, I remembered that I had families like the Leighs and Bakares who were always happy to see and share things with me.

I had many good friends from Queen's College, and we're still friends to date. Some of them are Dara Leigh, Jumoke Bakare, Priscilla Adieleh, Uzo Tom-Ona, Adeola Adebisi, Sona Jipreze, Doja Olagoke, Tolu Abubakar, and Abidemi Ajayi (though we became closer years after leaving secondary

school). At a point, we decided to have a savings group, though I can't remember how much we each saved at the end of each day or week. We put our savings in a *kolo* (piggy bank) and Jumoke was our accountant. We also loaned money to other students and collected interest on these loans. This interest was paid out to group members when they got their savings at the end of the term. The more people found out what we were up to, the more they wanted to join us, but we knew that expanding would become problematic at some point, so we didn't want to accommodate a lot of people. You can't blame us; we simply could only work with people we could vouch for. We simply kept it amongst ourselves, adding only two new people. Sadly, I can't remember everyone anymore.

Once, at the end of the term, the time came to bid friends farewell so we had our "board meeting" in the dining hall. After we had placed the money on the table and were about to share it, chaos broke out. I have no idea what happened, but we ran as fast as we could. I still don't know how we moved our belongings and disappeared from the dining hall so quickly. Fortunately, nothing was missing.

In the years since, whenever we've met and reminisced about the episode, everybody laughs. That incident made me realize they were friends to keep, friends who understood the value of money. Almost everyone is married now, which makes these memories even more beautiful to me.

Although my father had exposed me to the world of radio

as a child, my love for it grew in secondary school. When I was younger, before my father retired as the Editor, News and Current Affairs of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), I had often gone with him into the recording studio where I was constantly intrigued by the men and women who read the news every hour. They were so good with their spoken English and had an air of poise; I did not see how their jobs could be boring. There, I saw Bisi Olatilo, Soni Irabor, Atilade Atoyebi, and Tolu Fatoyinbo, now of blessed memory. I loved Tolu Fatoyinbo and Soni Irabor's voices the most and can remember running around the studio until I was called to be part of a Saturday morning show for kids. I suspect this may have had an impact on my choice to become a radio presenter later in life.

In SS2, my mum got me a little radio. It was tiny, about 6 or 8 cm; all I had to do was fit in four AAA batteries. As devices were not allowed in my school, it was easy to hide. With it, I would listen to 96.9 Cool FM in the morning, afternoon, and night. My favourite radio personalities were Dan Foster, Ashionye Michelle, Dare Art-Alade, Leke "Lakeside" Laguda, and Freeze. Because the device had a tiny light, my house prefect knew when to come looking for me, usually after lights out when I'd sleep off with the earphones plugged into my ears. Every time my house prefect seized the radio, my mum bought me a new one thinking the last one was stolen. I loved radio, and I didn't understand why. Each time I was

caught with a radio, I'd be punished, still I persisted.

SS2 was probably the most fun year of my time in QC. I participated in Calisthenics for our yearly Inter-House Sports Competition as well as an Acculturation Exercise that took me to Federal Government Girls' College, Ipetumodu, Osun State.

The Senior School Certificate Exams (SSCE) came with a little anxiety. I didn't understand Math, didn't like it either, but I did everything humanly possible to study hard (believe me when I say that I tried my best). The day before my Math examination, I did not sleep because I knew failing Math would mean that I wouldn't be able to get into the University without a resit. I had also heard that once one failed Math the first time, passing it later was tough.

When it was time for the exam, we sat in alphabetical order. Ashamedly, I approached the girl in front of me and begged her to "help" me. My dad checked the results when they were released. While I did not fail Math, I failed English, a subject I'd been confident I was going to pass. Thankfully, there were two sets of Senior Secondary School exams: The West African Examination Council (WAEC) exams and the National Examination Council exams (NECO). I had failed English in the WAEC exams, but I had also written the NECO exams. When NECO results were released, I checked my result myself as I did not want to repeat what happened with my WAEC results! Luckily, I passed all my core subjects, including English and Math. This was my saving grace. You'd have thought that

life would have been easier after that pass; it wasn't. The real sting of failing an examination wasn't the pain of having to resit, it was more about the misery my mum put me through. Anything bad I did that year was attributed to my poor academic performance.

Graduating from secondary school was a bittersweet experience for me. I knew the friends that I wanted to keep for life, and I'm very grateful for the ones I have; they're priceless.

LEAVING IKOYI

I lived in Ikoyi until I got into senior secondary school. My dad's office was at the Federal Ministry of Education, a stone's throw from Command Children's Primary School. The transition from Ikoyi to Ajah was set off by a series of events which my mum and I only learnt of when things were too late.

The day I found out what was happening, my dad had returned home to tell my mum that we had a few weeks to vacate our house. Apparently, he had indicated his interest to run for the office of Local Government Chairman to Eti Osa Local Government. As civil service rules require that workers must leave active service before electioneering begins, my dad had resigned. He hadn't informed my mum or me. He had a plan, but unfortunately, the plan did not go as expected. Sadly, by then, we were already running out of time. I remember

getting home that day and wondering why my mum was so angry. “I never thought I would ever be homeless in my life!” she shrieked. “I was never homeless as a single person!” Through her yelling, I had to ask my dad where we would live. He didn’t know. The only place that came to mind was an uncompleted building my parents owned in Badore.

In the late 80s and early 90s, my dad had received some money from a contract he had executed. Back then, he had desperately wanted to invest the money into my mum’s business. She insisted that she didn’t want him to do that. Instead, she wanted him to get a piece of land for the family, one where we could build a house later. They went back and forth on the issue, with things even degenerating into an argument. An uncle finally had to intervene. My mum’s insistence on not wanting him to help her expand her business had puzzled my dad, but God bless her heart for saying “no,” because my dad went on to buy the piece of land at Badore, Ajah. When we hurriedly had to vacate the official residence in Ikoyi, thankfully, there was a building at Badore, though it was not very habitable. I remember my dad running around to get the house ready. He wanted to move in before December 31, 1999, and we met the deadline. When he and I moved in, the stairway wasn't ready. There were no railings. The house had no window frames; the walls of the house were not plastered. My mum came much later as she had to sort out her store at Ikoyi.

Our finances were dwindling so fast that completing the house was the last thing on our mind. Some days, we were barely able to feed. I recall one day when we could not buy seasoning cubes. The meal that day was bland. As soon as I could, I snuck into my room and cried like I was dying. My dad would never just give up, and I didn't understand why. For the first time in my life, I *did shot put*. Essentially, I had to defecate in a bag and dispose it outside because there was no water closet in our home. Things soon went from bad to worse.

We had this family friend (from my dad's side of the family) who had just returned to Nigeria with the intent to start a sports newspaper. He asked my father to be the editor. Since dad had been out of a job for a while, he took the offer. Unfortunately, they did not sign any contract, a move that eventually led to many problems. Dad had to commute from Badore, Ajah to Surulere, and that was too tasking. He was then given an official car with a driver. After my dad worked for months, mum and I found out that he had been working without pay. He had never even brought that up at home. My mum was furious with my dad, especially as other members of staff were earning something. Unfortunately, things soon changed. Paying salaries soon became a problem as the newspaper didn't make as much money as expected. Sadly, there were no concrete plans on sustainability by the management. Dad had hoped for a miracle, especially seeing that his employer was still spending so much money. But when

the relationship went south, he had to quit. His employer attempted to repossess the official car which led to more tension with my mum. After considering his indebtedness to dad in salaries, the family friend left the car with my dad. The value of the car was nothing compared to what was owed my dad, but both parties decided to let sleeping dogs lie.

LEAVING HOME

When it was time to proceed to the university, I had to take the compulsory University Matriculation Examination organized by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). I prepared so hard that when I failed, I kept wondering how and why I flunked at my first attempt.

I enrolled in a preparatory JAMB class with the hope of passing at my next attempt. As I had some time on my hands, I decided to also learn how to drive. My dad offered to tutor me, so I occasionally used his Mazda 626, but he never let me drive outside the compound. Dad never really taught me how to drive; he simply showed me the basics and asked me to watch as he drove. I soon learnt how to warm the car's battery, then I graduated to moving it from where it was parked to the gate. The day I decided to take the car to the end of our street, I did so well that I drove it to my neighbour's house. I was floating on cloud nine until I drove through their security post. You know

the sad thing? Before leaving that day, my dad had warned me to allow him to return before I drove the car anywhere. I had refused, telling him that all I needed was just a few minutes. You don't need a soothsayer to guess that it was a horrible day for me.

At this point, I was still seeking university admission but didn't get the cut-off marks for the Law departments in Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) and University of Ibadan (*UI*). With the possibility of another year at home looming, my desperation climbed to new heights. Buying a form to change my course of study from Law to Theater Arts soon seemed like a no-brainer, but halfway through the process, my neighbour, Mr. Taiwo Kafidipe, told me about his younger sister, Arinola, who attended Olabisi Onabanjo University (*OOU*). She knew someone who could help ensure that I gained admission to study Law since I *really* didn't want Theater Arts.

My dad and I decided to visit Olabisi Onabanjo University to buy a Change of Institution form because my JAMB form had *OAU* and *UI* as first and second choices respectively. Arinola introduced me to Jibola who claimed that he could help me with Law, of course, for a fee. Becoming a lawyer was my childhood dream, I wanted Law at all cost. Fortunately, my dad agreed to pay and Jibola began the admission process.

Weeks later, I got a call that I had been offered admission to study Law at Olabisi Onabanjo University. My excitement was immeasurable. Prior to that, I had been so frustrated at home. I'll tell you why.

Six months earlier, I attended a family friend's New Year party with my boyfriend, his sister, and his best friend. After the party, I didn't think to tell my parents that my friends were stranded and needed a place to stay for the night. Instead, I let them in through my bedroom window. As it was a duplex and we lived upstairs, my neighbour downstairs saw them. Very early the next morning, they left the same way they got in.

I was at Joke Ojo's house (she lived two houses from mine) when my parents showed up. For the first time in my life, my dad slapped me and asked, "Who did you let into our house?" I dished out a lie claiming that nobody but me had slept in my room. My mother then informed me of the need to be truthful as our neighbour, Gbemi's mother, had seen me. At this point, I realized that the story had to stay this way – nobody but me slept in my room.

My parents put me in a car and headed to my boyfriend's. Knowing fully well that my mother is dramatic and that my accomplices had to corroborate this version of my story, I immediately sent them a text with details of my lie. The car had barely screeched to a halt when my mother jumped down. She ran to the gate, yelling for my boyfriend and his sister to come out. My dad's heart was clearly broken that I not only lied to him but I had failed to tell them that these friends were stranded. He was disappointed.

After that, my mum made life a *living hell* for me. I was grounded after the episode and denied anything that seemed

like fun. Gaining admission into university was my only way out of the misery at home. The minute I found out that my name was on the list, I got all the necessary items and was ready to resume that day. I had no idea where I would stay, but since Arinola had told me I could stay with her until I got my place, I figured that I would go there.

My only respite was when the Mendes family came to stay with us. It was fun for me, a break from the loneliness. Seeing as we had visitors, my mother toned down the punishments. I do not remember how long they stayed, but their arrival was such a relief. Still, gaining admission into the university couldn't have come at a better time.

OFF TO SCHOOL

When I got to school, I went to Jibola to inform him that I could not locate Arinola and her phone was switched off. Jibola told me that there was a Queen's College Alumna (OGQC) living in one of the apartments in his hostel, so I followed him there. To my surprise, I met Abidemi Ajayi who had been a member of my set in QC. She was in the Z arm and in Danfodio (Red) House. She was as excited to see me, as I was she. When she asked where I was staying, I told her my story. Abidemi then told me she was in for a pre-degree program and that her elder sibling, Sister Dayo, also attended

our school. They stayed together in their studio apartment.

When Abidemi asked that I stay with them, I thought it was for the night. However, I was amazed to learn that they were cool with having me as their roommate when her sister returned. Just like that, I stayed in that room for over five years (inclusive of the periods with strikes). Their dad did not let me contribute to the rent as long as his children lived there. Sister Dayo graduated in my third year, and Abidemi moved to another campus in my second year. My hostel was called House on The Rock Hostel at Ita-Merin Junction, Ago-Iwoye. I had hall mates who were also my classmates—they are Yinka Hassan, Oyinda Omisore, Busola Adams, Wunmi Olubajo, Bimbo Laoye, and Tope Ilori as well as friends like Funmi Odude, Ayomide Adebayo, and Lawunmi Epemolu who lived across from my hall, in another hall called *I2K*, where Dotun Adedoyin also stayed. Tutu Sanni joined later. Linda Otuoniyo lived in Ijebu-Igbo, while Adebimpe Adeola stayed down the road.

My set in OOU was quite large because the school had merged two admission years. Because of that, every step in the verification process always had a crowd. When Jibola told me that he could help with the verification process, I gladly gave him my tuition and acceptance fees. My hall mates would leave home early for verification purposes, but I'd stay back because I had someone assisting me. Months after everyone had finished and my parents started asking, I got my first-year tuition and

acceptance fee receipts from Jibola. When I handed them to my mum, she immediately said something was off about them. Deep down, I queried her assumption as she had never seen a receipt from or been to my school. Still, she insisted, saying that she just could not place a finger on what was wrong. Seeing that I had inflated my tuition fee to get extra cash, I didn't push further. Instead, I assured her that all was well.

In my first year, I didn't attend the regular parties at clubs. Truth be told, I never really did much in terms of socializing outside my immediate circle. The one event I remember stepping out for was a send-off party for Gbolahan Peters. He was a friend's boyfriend, so it meant that my friends and I had to show up to "support" him. Yinka and I were in the same car.

Halfway through, a number of cars left the convoy. Henry drove the car I was in. He had his friend in the passenger's side while Yinka and I sat at the back. I was still wondering where all the cars went when he said that he was no longer interested in attending the party. According to him, he couldn't keep up with the convoy and wanted to return to his house in Ijebu-Igbo. This was at a time when cult activities were rampant in OOU. Everybody had heard stories of ritual/serial killings. As if things were not suspicious as they were, three other cars from the convoy kept perambulating on the dark road. Ijebu-Igbo was as silent as a cemetery when we arrived.

When we got to his house, he asked if we wanted to come with him or sort ourselves out. We both got down from his

car, unsure of where we were going. I recall wearing a black halter neck and a short skirt, an outfit that was not suited for running or escaping attention. Heart in my mouth, I prayed to God to send help.

It came sooner than expected when a voice yelled my name from one of the three other cars left in the convoy. When I gained admission, I was told that some of my friends from QC were also in OOU, but I had never met any of them apart from Abidemi. This mysterious morning, the person that called me was Priscilla Adieleh, who was in the next car with Temi Fashanu. I was too scared to ask questions; Yinka and I hurriedly squeezed into the car. Fortunately, Priscilla stayed in Ijebu-Igbo, so we simply had to persuade the guy driving their car to take us to her place. He agreed.

Our car was the only one on the road as the other drivers had gone the moment they found out Henry was no longer heading to the party. When we got down, I thought walking through the gate was our next line of action. I was wrong. We had to scale the fence. As the last person was about to jump, Priscilla's landlord appeared with a double-barreled gun. It is a miracle that I'm still here to share this story because he thought we were robbers. For the rest of my stay in school, I never went to night parties or clubs. I just wasn't interested. The events of that night produced enough adrenaline to fuel my body through the university.

COMPLICATIONS AT SCHOOL

Days after that, while waiting under the tree at the mini campus with my friends, someone approached us and asked if I was Adenike Oyetunde. I replied in the affirmative. He said he had just seen my admission letter from JAMB at the Dean's Office. I wondered how my friends who had completed their verification exercise by themselves had not received their admission letters, let alone *me* who was yet to start—at least, that's what Jibola told me. I collected the admission letter and kept it properly, but I was surprised as I thought that one could only have gotten the letter after completion of the verification process. It looked like an original copy from JAMB and was stated therein that I was offered provisional admission to study Law at OOU. I had still not completed my verification exercise, but some of my friends had finished and submitted all the required documents to the school authorities.

In our second year, I noticed that whenever there was a list of any sort, my name was hardly ever on it. I had noticed earlier that the five of us whose names hardly appeared were people whose admission was being processed by Jibola. Unfortunately, nobody thought it really meant anything—none of us really did. Occasionally, my mum would ask if everything was going well in school, and she'd specifically ask about my admission. I covered things up until I noticed that many people—most of who had complaints about their admission

process—were looking for Jibola. If you're wondering how I got to the second year without an admission letter, here's what happened: My admission year was a combination of two years, and so the practice is that admission letters were delivered to students at their respective faculties. For whatever reason, we did not start to get ours until the end of our first year and the early part of the second year. The schools always pasted their admission list which sufficed as proof of admission.

Things became scary when the school published a final list with everyone in my class. My matriculation number was 03056189 (a number Jibola brought to me in my room). Except for the five of us who had Jibola as the middleman processing our admission, no other classmate had 03056 starting their matriculation numbers. Although I had started harbouring the possibility of foul play, I still thought that the number of people in my set was to blame for this anomaly. Since I still had no proof that I had completed my verification, I figured out that once I did, things would be sorted out. Whenever I asked Jibola what was happening, he told one story or the other. In addition to giving me two receipts—one for my tuition and the second for the acceptance fee—he also reassured me a lot, so I was often at peace.

When I returned to school in my third year, Michael, whom Jibola had also assisted with his admission, and I proceeded to the Administrative Block to verify the authenticity of our matriculation numbers and admissions. I had started to hear and see more people complain about some irregularities, so

I thought it was best to confirm my status.

We got the shock of our lives when we found out our admissions were fake; according to them, we had never been offered admission. Because I had come clean with my mum, I knew it was right to call home immediately. I had to bring them up to speed with the latest finding as my world was literally collapsing. That was how the race against time began.

Seeing as I had a JAMB admission letter, their claim that I wasn't offered admission did not make sense. I was confused so I returned to Jibola who gave yet another story which dragged into my fourth year when I was about to write exams. He was dishonest about the whole thing, and we didn't know what the situation was. It didn't help that he had and had refused to return the original copy of my O level result, JAMB statement of result, birth certificate, and Proof of State of Origin document. After we decided to verify our admission, many people that he had helped also embarked on the verification process. They all realized that they had no admission.

My lecturer, Jide Ogunsakin, who was also a friend, knew my story. He advised me to go see Professor Folarin Shyllon, the Dean of the Faculty of Law. To date, I still say that God brought him to the department because of me, as he was re-deployed shortly after my admission problem was sorted out. Adesuwa Imasogie (my classmate, now of blessed memory) took me to her mother, Mrs. Imasogie, who was also my lecturer. After listening to my account, she also thought it was best to go

see the Dean. I did. What actually caught Professor Shyllon's attention was that I was a Queen's College Alumna (OGQC). Coincidentally, his only daughter had also attended QC. When I informed him that I had been told I had no admission, he queried that as soon as he saw my admission letter from JAMB.

Some advised that seeing the Vice-Chancellor was the best next line of action, so my dad had to come to school. The VC minuted on my letter seeking assistance to regularize my admission. He then asked the Dean of my faculty to advise on what to do. Professor Shyllon was quite interested in my case and wanted to get to the bottom of the matter.

I continued to attend classes and when I was done, I began sorting my admission issues. The Dean of Admissions informed me that the only way forward was a confirmation from JAMB. I passed the same information to my dad who travelled to Abuja to check for my name on the admissions board's system.

As my dad could not afford to go by air, he went by road to Abuja. It broke my heart that I had to subject him to a long trip that took over thirty hours. Although I was writing exams that day, I could not wait to hear from my dad; I was so desperate. When he called, his words were ones I'd never forget. "Adenike," he said, "continue to serve the God that you serve because indeed JAMB offered you admission and your name is on the board's system." How? What happened here? I still do not know how I was composed after hearing the liberating news, but when we finished talking, I shed a few tears.

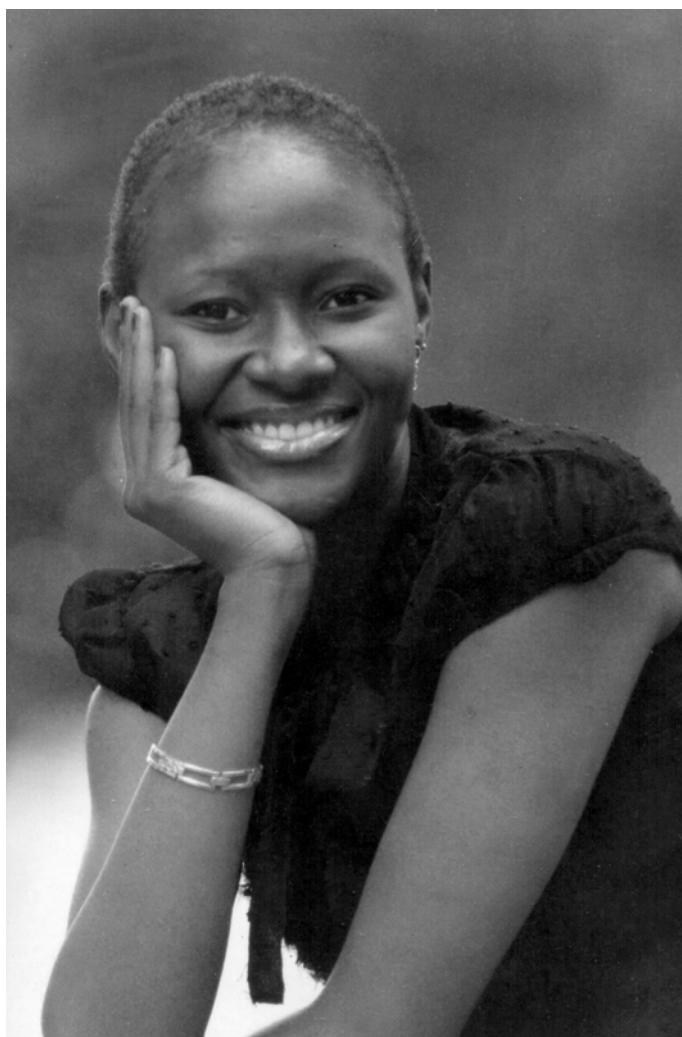
Another journey to regularizing my admission began. Now that I was certified as admitted, I had to get a school approved matriculation number plus scores from over five years onto the broadsheets. As a project supervisor had already been assigned to me, I approached Mr Ogunsakin to help speak to my course adviser. I wanted him to switch my project supervisor to someone who knew my story and would be very patient with me. Thankfully, it worked; the departmental heads listened. Invariably, it meant that in my final year, I didn't have a valid matriculation number. Because my final exams were approaching, resolution of issues concerning my admission had to be put on hold. There was no place for distractions. Once the exams ended, I continued with the process of regularizing my admission. It later came to light that the reason I wasn't given a valid matriculation number was because Jibola had failed to pay my acceptance and tuition fees. My parents—God bless them—provided the money to pay those fees and get things sorted. By then, almost everyone had left school after the exams. I, on the other hand, had to stay back. It was a very sad period of my life. While working on getting my scores on the broadsheets, I simultaneously processed my first year verification and final year clearance.

Back in my second year, before I took ill, my class representative, Abass Nurudeen, would bring sheets with our exam records to class. For reasons I cannot remember, I started making copies of pages that had my name. What it meant

was that I had records of my results from over the years; it almost seemed like I knew this would be necessary in future. After verifying from the various departments, it was time to compile all my results on the faculty's broadsheet. At this time, I was one of the lucky few because unfortunately, Michael had to go back in classes by two years. Another saving grace was that a few years earlier, my dad and I had visited the university to buy, fill, and submit a change of institution form. I BELIEVE that it was GOD who allowed me to do that myself and have the JAMB admission letter as my shield. Eventually, several weeks after the session ended, I completed my verification and clearance.

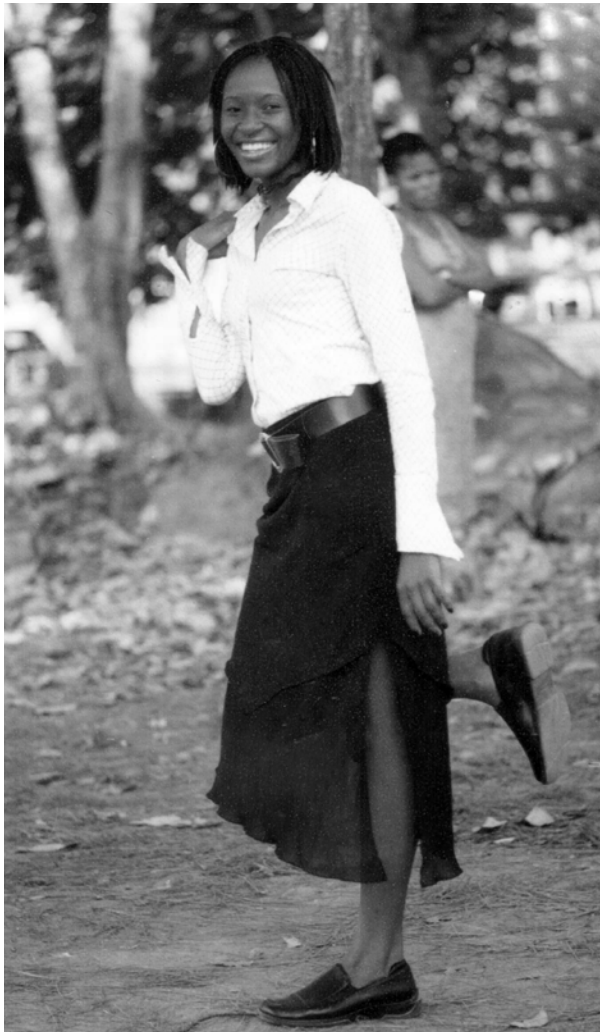
THE HARDEST FALL

During my first year in school, I occasionally went to see my parents in Lagos. One catch in going home was that I got to enjoy home-cooked meals before heading back to school. Many times, I would take some food for my friends. We even had an unwritten rule that anyone who went home was to bring some food so the people in school would have a taste of home. The second year was no different, and this trend of showing up at home to shovel down food continued. One weekend during my first semester, I raced home. If only I had known that that trip would change my life forever.











*Dad, Me, Late Uncle Gbenga Akinragbe (Mum's
oldest sibling) and Mum*



Get The Complete Book