

# OCEAN OF TEARS

OLOLADE AKINLABI



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*This piece of work is dedicated to the memory of  
my mum, **Olabisi** and my sister, **Oluwafadekemi**.*

*May their souls continue to **rest in peace**.*



*Ocean of Tears* is a novel about surviving physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and the pursuit of justice and change. It contains adult themes and sensitive content that may be difficult for some readers.

If you are in an abusive relationship or healing from abuse-related trauma, you are not alone. Please see the back of this book for resources.



# OCEAN OF TEARS





## PREFACE

**I**N NIGERIA, A WOMAN COMMITTED THE HORRIFIC act of fatally stabbing her husband. While the act of violence is indefensible, it raises questions that often remain unanswered: What drives a person to commit such a horrendous act against someone they vowed to love? Asking this question is not meant to justify the crime but to understand the circumstances that shape human reactions and withhold judgment until we've considered the broader context, experiences, and societal norms leading to such tragedies.

In this woman's case, the trigger was her husband's infidelity, but beneath the surface lies a more profound tale of human emotions, societal pressures, and unspoken struggles.

In penning *Ocean of Tears*, I intend to delve deeper into the complex dynamics of human relationships and explore profound questions that transcend the boundaries of gender and societal norms. My goal is to raise our consciousness to the issues I believe many cultures take with levity: infidelity, domestic abuse, sexual assault, and dehumanization. These

are not isolated problems, but the cumulative effects of deeply ingrained silent issues that can turn individuals into reactors to their circumstances.

Listening to debates about gender inequality made me ponder whether the world could ever achieve a balance where both men and women find balance and equity. Recent years have seen positive shifts, with women of all generations breaking free from the cycle of inequality and both women and men shattering the silence of the abuse they've endured. However, challenges persist, particularly in areas like socio-cultural conflicts in marriage and romantic relationships. These conflicts encompass physical, emotional, and sexual violence, feminism, and anti-feminism.

*Ocean of Tears* draws from events I have witnessed in Nigeria that are mirrored globally. The novel looks to strike a balance between masculinity and feminism, placing a spotlight on pressing women's issues. It does not seek to ignite gender wars but to inspire healthy dialogue on the more profound tale of human emotions, societal pressures, and unspoken struggles.

As a male author, I acknowledge I could never fully understand women's experiences. My goal is to shed light on injustices concerning women and to use storytelling as a platform for women's voices to be respected, heard, and valued.





# ARIYO

**PART ONE**



## CHAPTER ONE

March 2, 2014

**I** WILL NOT GIVE UP.  
She held her breath as she struggled to free herself from him, then she gasped. She fought from under him and slid backward on the sofa.

He drew closer.

“This will not happen again!” She stood to take her leave.

He held the edge of her pink top and pulled her back down. He pinned her to the sofa.

She resisted.

His power surpassed hers. He forced his hand into her top and smirked contemptuously.

*Something must have come over him.* Ariyo tried to pry his hands off her thighs.

He persisted and groped her viciously.

“Will you stop this!” Ariyo yelled.

He gave no response. Instead, he pressed further, oppressing her ear and neck violently with his taut mouth.

Ariyo turned her head to free her ear from his mouth and shifted backward to create some distance between her thighs and his hands. She grimaced at his hostile expression.

*God, why has he suddenly turned into a beast?*

“Please stop this!” she pleaded.

The man paid no attention. Instead, he grew more aggressive. He tore her top, then ripped her bra like a feral dog.

She pushed his head with her right hand and tugged to draw down her bra with her left.

But he was obstinate. He pinned her hands behind the arm of the sofa with his left hand. With his free hand, he roughly handled her breast.

“Please! Don’t do this to me! Not again!” Ariyo begged. “This is not what I want!” Perspiration rolled down her face. Her heartbeat sped. Sweat washed away her brown foundation, joining her tears.

“Wait!” She stared at him.

He halted but did not look at her face.

*Finally, I’ve gotten through to him.*

Ariyo took a deep breath. She continued quietly but pleading, “I told you, I don’t want to do this again until my wedding night. Please.”

For a moment, it seemed as if he understood.

Then he started again.

*He has to stop. I cannot go through this again. How did I miss this?*

Ariyo grappled to understand how she had ended up in this position. She clung to her dignity and refused to surrender it. “Please!” She again prayed.

The man did not care.

Ariyo raised her head from the arm of the sofa. She was desperate to snap him out of this violent haze.

*Maybe if he looks into my eyes and sees them full of tears, he’ll have mercy on me.*



“Please! Look at me!”

Still, he did not listen or raise his gaze to meet her eyes. He forced his right hand into her skirt and groped her thighs. He released his grip on her wrist for a moment, but before Ariyo could make use of her newly freed hand, his wish was fulfilled. He tore at her underwear.

Ariyo’s strength left her. She felt frail, weak, and tired, her emotions in turmoil as she wept silently and somberly. Her gaze drifted aimlessly around the room, searching for refuge but finding none. The sealed window guarded the room as though protecting closely held secrets, while the filtered sunlight revealed tiny dust particles that soaked up the undiscernible messages from the intermittent drip of the kitchen’s leaky faucet.

Ariyo’s senses came to rest on a stain on the wall resembling a finger—perhaps belonging to the man. She stayed fixated on the stain, numbing herself to the agony she knew would come.

The man tugged at his zipper to complete his mission. Then, he froze.

## CHAPTER TWO

April 2014  
One month later

**Y**OU HAVE FIFTEEN MINUTES.” THE CORPORAL LED the barrister to a small, dimly lit room with the faint smell of mildew in the air. The space was sparsely furnished, with a poorly cemented floor riddled with cracks. Though the walls had been painted at some point, the color, now faded left the room drab and lifeless. The only source of light came from a half-open window, which cast a weak ray across the room, revealing two rusted iron chairs flanking a plastic table in the center of the room. Seated on a chair was a woman, she barely looked up when the barrister entered.

The barrister fixed the corporal with a scolding look of disapproval. “You shouldn’t be keeping my client in this dark,” she said.

The corporal shut the door and left the barrister alone with her client.

“Hello, Ariyo.” Barrister Tutu dragged the chair opposite her client and sat.

Ariyo looked haggard—like she hadn’t bathed since that torturous day. Yet, despite her unplaited, bumpy hair and the rashes on her face, she still possessed a striking beauty.

Her oblong face with a dainty nose and the dimples on both sides of her cheeks remained impossible to overlook.

Ariyo lifted her head to look at her visitor. “Barrister Tutu?” Disbelief hid behind her red, swollen eyes. She flattened her wrinkled Ankara dress with both hands, attempting to become somewhat presentable for the distinguished woman before her.

“Yes, I was chosen by the foundation to handle your case.”

Ariyo knew Tutu was one of the most respected women activists in the country, an experienced lawyer who won the most complex cases for the Ariyo-Ayo Foundation.

“Save me! Please, save me!” Ariyo pounded her fists on the plastic table. It trembled beneath her.

“Calm down, Ariyo. Please calm down—”

“I should calm down? I should calm down!” Ariyo sprung from her chair. The rickety table nearly toppled under the force of her outburst. “I didn’t do it! I didn’t—” she pleaded her innocence to the closed door, where the corporal stood on the other side.

“I know, and trust me, everything will be fine.” Barrister Tutu placed her palms on Ariyo’s hands. “Tell me your side of the story.” Tutu retrieved a notebook and pen from her bag. “I’m here to listen.”



# DUNSI

## PART TWO



## CHAPTER THREE

April 2000  
14 years prior

**D**UNSI, A WOMAN IN HER MID-THIRTIES, HAD SLOWLY seen her beauty wane as poverty cast its long shadow over her life. There was a time when weaker men lost control around her when she walked, but her stride changed when poverty showed her the other side of life. Her hair, once a subject of admiration, had suffered from a lack of maintenance, forcing her to cut it short. Ariyo, her only daughter, took after her and looked like the prize Dunsu once was. Both possessed a fair complexion, oblong faces, and bright, dimpled smiles exhibiting perfectly straight teeth with a gap between their front two.

Dunsu maintained her daily rituals, bathing and applying body and hair cream—though not the expensive kind. Still, these couldn't disguise her weariness, and looking at her, one would assume she was an aged woman. Her attire no longer gleamed with the jewelry she once owned; she sold them when hunger nearly slayed her and her three children, Ariyo, Tobi, and Itunu. "If the last sacrifice I would pay is to see my children happy while I stripped

naked, I would.” She told friends whenever they teased her about her shabby attire.

Dunsi tried to limit discussions about her husband, Segun. However, her emotions frequently spilled over, and she shared everything about him with her children, family members, and bosom friends. “He comes home as the spirit leads,” she’d jest with her children whenever they inquired about their father. She was determined not to paint their father as a demon. Nevertheless, her struggles remained an open book.

Segun fell into the category of men over whom Lagos ladies have an apathetic opinion. “He is just there,” they would say about him, meaning he was neither ugly nor handsome. However, he was the type of man a lady would pray to have in terms of intelligence. He was a first-class graduate of Accountancy from Obafemi Awolowo University. He excelled at work, winning many awards and earning his company’s praise.

Segun was a dark-skinned man and shorter than Dunsi. When their marriage was filled with love, they walked side by side, either to church or on any other occasion. Their marriage, now fourteen years old, was marred by a transformation Dunsi couldn’t precisely pinpoint. Indeed, she knew it had been a long time in the past, long before she began shouldering the responsibilities of their children. She was always confused about how to define her marital status. She was neither a single mother nor in a traditional marriage, her husband returned home only when his libido missed the place between her thighs or when his mouth salivated for her food, but that didn’t make this arrangement a marriage.



Dunsi could not confirm if her husband had a concubine, but rumors from the town gossips were that he built a house at Lekki and kept another woman there. Some said the concubine had not given birth yet, while others said she had given birth to twins—such were the variety of reports Dunsi received. She could not dismiss none of these speculations. She knew her husband was more than capable of building a house at Lekki since his employer was one of the biggest banks in Lagos. As for acquiring another wife, his truant attitudes at home were convincing enough.

“When a man suddenly nags at his loved ones, it shows he is being showered with love by a husband snatcher.” This had always been Dunsi’s conclusion when informed by gossip.

*But who am I to question him? The way the Lord works is a mystery.*

These and any other contemplations about her marriage woes always ended up in reminiscences of how the journey with Segun started.



DUNSI WAS 20-YEARS-OLD WHEN HER path crossed with Uncle Segun, as younger kids popularly called him. He was far older than the other boys around. He couldn’t secure a job after graduation, so he joined his aged father, who sold house paints at Yaba market next to Dunsi’s mother’s shop, where they sold foodstuffs.

During those days, Dunsi worked in her mother’s shop while she eagerly awaited the verdict of her Joint Admission and Matriculation Board exam, which would determine her fate regarding university admission.

Dunsi's mother was shrewd and quick to notice the attention Segun lavished on her daughter. He always found some reason to linger around the shop, a presence that raised her mother's maternal instincts concerning the ways of men.

"Your relationship with Segun is getting close; be careful. Men can be deceptive," Dunsi's mother warned her.

"Mama, we are just friends. Trust me, I can't do such," Dunsi assured her.

Their friendship continued for six months until an unexpected twist of fate unfolded. Segun, allergic to the drought season, was struck by malaria. The illness left him bedridden, unable to make his way to the Yaba market to help his father, and Dunsi could only send her well-wishes through Segun's father.

After two weeks of sickness, Segun's father approached Dunsi. "Segun is upset with you. Why have you not come to see him?" he asked.

"I expected he might feel that way, sir. I will try to visit him soon," Dunsi politely replied.

Bolstered by her budding fondness for Segun, Dunsi gathered the courage to seek her mother's consent. Her mother, wise and cautious, advised her to be discerning and not be cajoled by the sugar-coated words of men. But Dunsi had long convinced her mother that her religious zeal was her highest priority, and she was mature enough to distinguish between right and wrong. For these reasons, Dunsi's mother assented.

"But make sure you come back early," her mother warned.

For Dunsi, a day that started full of hope ended full of shame. When Segun stroked her thighs gently, she thought it was one of their usual plays at the shop. Instead, he forced his way into her panties, and before she could get his hands off her, the deed had been done. She wailed under the torture and pain, but nothing escaped the walls, and no help came. Segun shamelessly defiled her virginity.

Dunsi blamed herself. She thought she could hide the disgrace from her parents, but soon she missed her menstruation. Later, her mother noticed her breast enlargement and Dunsi's complaints of nausea. She was taken to the family doctor, who affirmed she was two months pregnant.

Dunsi's mother wailed in anguish. She prayed and moved back and forth between forgiveness and disowning Dunsi, but a mother's merciful love prevailed.

Segun accepted responsibility for Dunsi's pregnancy and earnestly asked for her hand in marriage, so maybe good had come of it. However, Dunsi's father withdrew his sponsorship for her to attend University despite her respectable JAMB score of two hundred and twenty. Dunsi's dream of becoming a doctor, like her JAMB score, became a product for the bin.

Dunsi couldn't count the number of menial jobs she held before raising enough funds to rent her shop in Ojota. She was a road sweeper for the Empowerment of Unemployed Women for Lagos State. This role was an improvement from her earlier job as a housekeeper for a wealthy family, where she received remuneration in the form of leftover food that she prepared for the family.

Despite all she'd gone through, Dunsi held fast to her ambition and was determined to make her way. And it's a good thing she had; otherwise, she and her children would have been destitute when Segun left them to fend for themselves.



“SEGUN SHOWED HIS TRUE COLORS as a silver-tongued man.” This was Dunsi’s usual way of narrating her hurdles to friends and family. “And she is the product of the rape.” Dunsi would end her story by wiping her tears and pointing her finger at Ariyo.

Dunsi knew it was wrong to disclose such information to anyone. Still, most of the time, her emotions ruled over her thinking.

## CHAPTER FOUR

**D**UNSI AND HER CHILDREN DRESSED FOR CHURCH and waited patiently for the decision of the pregnant clouds that loomed outside. As she settled into her seat on the sofa next to Ariyo, Dunsi couldn't help but feel a swell of pride in the vibrant garment she had purchased for her daughter. The intricate details and colors perfectly complemented Ariyo's natural beauty. Itunu, seated beside Ariyo, looked dashing in his African wax print Ankara outfit and brown sandals. Tobi, who occupied the other end of the sofa, looked equally handsome in his matching Ankara attire and sandals.

Dunsi watched her children, entranced by the wind, flip-flapping the sitting room curtain, causing the wall calendar to flutter insistently. "Go and close the louvers," Dunsi instructed Ariyo.

Ariyo closed the steel blinds and nearly jumped out of her skin from the loud rattling at the front door.

"Who could that be?" Dunsi sent Itunu to see who it was. They rarely had visitors before church, and she couldn't imagine anyone braving the impending storm to stop by.

Itunu peeped through the hole in the iron door. “It’s Daddy,” he said.

“Daddy?” Dunsi raised a brow in surprise. She hadn’t expected him to come home on a Sunday, as he had never done such a thing before.

“Good morning,” Segun said in his usual awful manner as if addressing suspicious strangers. He strode straight past the sitting room and disappeared into his bedroom.

“What’s this drama about today?” Ariyo whispered to her mum.

“I don’t know,” Dunsi replied in a hushed tone. She shrugged and signaled to Ariyo and her brothers to remain quiet. She could feel her palms start to sweat.

Segun surfaced from his room. “I want to tell you something very important,” he announced, picking up a stool and sitting before them.

Dunsi and her children stared at him, a mixture of curiosity and concern evident in their expressions.

“The landlord called this morning. Our one-year rent is due for payment, and failure to pay means we’ll be evicted from the house.” Segun cleared his throat and faced the children. “And as you can see, the country’s economy is in recession. I don’t have the money to pay exorbitant rent, so I’m advising your mother to find a new home.” He crossed his legs, signifying his superiority.

“Daddy, what of your house at Lekki?” Itunu asked.

Dunsi locked eyes with her son and shot him with a stern look while Ariyo pinched his rib.

“The one your mother or grandmother built for me?” Segun responded sarcastically.

“He is just a small boy,” Dunsi defended her son. “But to where do you want us to move?” she asked with a sense of decorum.

“How am I supposed to know? Move into your new husband’s house,” Segun retorted.

“My new husband?” Dunsi pointed her two fingers to her chest.

“Oh, you think I’m not aware? I’ve only chosen to be silent because I’m fed up with you! You witch!” Segun yelled.

“*Ah*. You’ve started seeing these fake prophets again. The same fake prophets who have always told you I’m a witch,” Dunsi sighed. “Haven’t they done enough doom to this marriage?”

“Daddy, this is not fair!” Ariyo blurted.

Dunsi motioned for Ariyo to keep quiet and quickly kneeled before Segun. It wasn’t time to defend against allegations but rather a time to implore for their continued residence in the house.

Tears welled in Dunsi’s eyes. “Please, Segun...” her voice filled with desperation. It had been a long time since she called her husband by his name. The usual nomenclature was “Daddy Ariyo,” following the customary way a woman should address her spouse. However, Dunsi understood the power attached to one’s name in Africa. She hoped that by continuously using his name, especially in moments of begging, she could somehow sway his decision and bring about a change of heart.

Ariyo joined her mother on her knees. “Please, sir, don’t send us packing.”

Tobi and Itunu also joined in the sobs. Thirty minutes passed, and they were still kneeling, begging Segun, who seemed to enjoy their pain. He returned to his bedroom and began packing his belongings into the small leather bag he brought with him. Once done, he slung the bag over his shoulder and scuttled toward the front door to take his leave.

Dunsi and her children continued to implore him.

Segun stopped at the threshold and looked at them as if they were street beggars ravaged by hunger. “Okay, all right, I’ve heard you,” he finally said.

Dunsi felt a surge of relief within, but she concealed her emotions. She and her children stood at attention like soldiers waiting for their officer’s command.

“I’ve heard you, but your request will be granted on one condition...” Segun paused.

They all gazed at Segun’s lips, waiting for him to utter it.



SEGUN’S CONDITION WAS UNBEARABLE. HE had agreed to retain the lease on the house but with the stipulation that Dunsi foot the bill for rent. Of course, he knew this was an impossible demand. Dunsi couldn’t afford it. However, Dunsi, always resourceful, rented a room in a tenement building using her *esusu* savings, a traditional Nigerian cooperative society in which members collectively contribute funds and take turns receiving lump sum payouts.

The sudden change in living conditions was quite an adjustment. Moving everyone into one room starkly contrasted their previous dwelling. Yet Dunsi was grateful that the new house was not too far from her shop, and she took



solace that it wasn't one of the overcrowded, typical Lagos residences. They only had to share the building with the aged landlord and his wife. "Maybe life would not be so bad after all," she thought.

Dunsi could see her children's delight in their new surroundings. She often sat on her *apoti*, a small wooden stool, and watched fondly as Tobi and Itunu frolicked in the backyard, aiming at the plump oranges hanging from the giant tree. Their accuracy improved with each throw, and as each stone found its mark, two, three, or even four oranges would tumble to the ground, prompting the boys to race and retrieve their prizes.

Dunsi had a wonderful gift for storytelling. At night, her children eagerly gathered around her, their faces lit with anticipation as they listened to her recount urban legends while savoring the juicy oranges they had plucked. Before bedtime, they would all gaze out the window, watching the milky moon's gentle glow seep through the wooden frames. Over time, life in their new house settled into a comforting routine, and each family member found their source of happiness within those walls.



# ARIYO

**PART THREE**



## CHAPTER FIVE

**A**RIYO WAS NOW FOURTEEN AND A STUDENT IN JSS2 at God's Win Secondary School. God's Win, an unapproved school in Oshodi, Lagos State, was the only school her mother could afford to enroll her in after Segun abandoned the family. Despite the hardship, Ariyo cherished the newfound peace that came with her father's abandonment—his random visits to pick up clothes for his supposed work meetings or to demand cooked food he never paid for.

Ariyo grew an instant affection for the topography of their new home, from the clay-rich soil to the coarse rocks up the hills and the bending trees that danced to the tune of the wind's whisper. Often, she stood by the window, gazing out at this intricate creation of nature, and inspired, she composed poems that celebrated its beauty.

*Accordance of nature,  
darkness gives way to the light,  
the trees bend for the wind to pass,  
the sun descends from the pores of the cloud,  
and the crust welcomes the rain without complaint.*

“Nature is my muse,” she exclaimed joyfully, reciting her verses to her mother.

“Keep it up,” Dunsi would respond, patting Ariyo’s shoulder.

Ariyo never allowed her knowledge of her unfortunate conception to tarnish her spirit, and what truly mattered was what she could achieve, regardless of her background. Therefore, she ensured she excelled in school, and her brilliance was unquestionable. In every examination, she consistently secured the first position, a feat that only faltered when her interest waned—a rare occurrence. Her teachers held her in high regard, making her among the favorites of the entire faculty. Yet, her mother often cautioned her about her boldness, warning her that boldness must be managed carefully, or it may ruin one’s life.

“It is intrinsic, Mama,” Ariyo would assert, determined not to let anyone stifle her ambition.

Ariyo was not just a bright student; she also carried herself with the elegance of a young lady from a higher class. Her majestic gait struck fear into the hearts of boys who dared to approach her. She was discerning, carefully evaluating their character before considering them as friends. “They must possess impeccable character, intelligence, and respect for all girls,” she declared.

Ariyo, much like her mother, shared a fair complexion and dimples that became more pronounced whenever she was amused. Her height was neither too short nor too tall—she stood at 5 feet 2 inches, slightly taller than the average girl her age. Her features hinted she might develop a somewhat chubby build as she grew older, but she saw

this as an addition to her beauty that would bring more spice to her splendor.

Ariyo's daily routine rarely altered. After school, she would take the familiar path to pick up her younger brothers, Tobi and Itunu, before heading to her mother's shop. Tobi was in primary four, and Itunu was in nursery one. Their school was near their mother's shop. Still, Dunsi was often busy tending to customers, so Ariyo bore the responsibility of getting her brothers from school. Her steps were purposeful and efficient, and she kept a watchful eye on her brothers as they navigated the busy streets. The only exception to this routine was during school vacation when a neighbor would look after Tobi and Itunu at home so Ariyo could assist her mother in the shop.

One evening, Ariyo was surprised when her mother returned home earlier than usual. Dunsi seemed weary as she trudged into the house.

"You are home early today," Ariyo said. "Were there no sales today?"

"No, it had been one customer after another, nonstop." Dunsi removed her shoes and massaged her sore feet. "I would not have come home this early if Mummy Grace had not called to say she would visit by six."

Mummy Grace, Ariyo's aunt, was Dunsi's elder sister. In Nigeria, it is customary to call older female relatives "Mummy."

"She is enjoying her husband. He works as an engineer with a construction company," Dunsi would often mention when discussing Mummy Grace as if it were the type of husband Ariyo should aspire to find.

Ariyo assisted her mother in the kitchen to prepare dinner—a meal of amala, soup, and smoked fish. Ariyo made the amala, skillfully mixing yam flour with hot water and kneading it into a smooth elastic dough, while Dunsi prepared the soup, spiced with onions, locust beans, and melon, which gave a savory aroma from the blend of flavors, with a hint of sweetness from the onions and a nuttiness from the locust beans and melon.

As they sat down to eat, Dunsi remarked on the bustling market. “Business is good these days,” she noted as she scooped a morsel of soft amala with her fingers.

Ariyo casually reached for her glass of water. “That has always been our usual prayer,” she commented after finishing her cup’s last bit of water. “*Ehn*, Mummy, how is Mummy Biliki?” referring to her mother’s best friend in the market.

“She is fine.” Dunsi sighed. “Everything is fine.”

Just then, Tobi belched loudly as he eagerly turned his bowl into his mouth to devour the last drops of soup.

“See his head!” Itunu pointed, and everyone laughed at Tobi’s soup-covered face.

“*Abi o...*,” Dunsi scoffed. “I’ve warned you not to swallow soup in that manner!”

As the evening wore on, there was still no sign of Mummy Grace, so they went to bed, hoping to see her another day.

That night, there were no folktales. Dunsi and Ariyo slept on the second-hand wood-framed bed, while Itunu and Tobi slept on the floor mat. They hadn’t slept long when they heard a knock on the door. It was Mummy Grace at long last.



Ariyo opened the door and helped Mummy Grace inside. “Good evening, ma,” she greeted with a yawn. She nearly stumbled as she guided Mummy Grace into the house.

“*Bawo ni?*” Mummy Grace replied in Yoruba to mean, “How are you?”

“I’m fine, ma,” Ariyo responded, peering at Mummy Grace, who hadn’t changed in the two years since their last meeting. Pudgy, fair-complexioned, and short. At thirty-eight, she still appeared young and fit. She still had the small lump on her head from when a neighbor accidentally hit her with a pan while trying to swat a fly.

Dunsi checked the wall clock. It was 9:15 p.m. “Ha, sister mi, what brought you here at this hour?” Dunsi sat upright and tightened her Ankara wrapper. “You said six p.m.”

“Yes, I promised six o’clock. But you know Lagos traffic, na. The traffic was terrible on my way here.”

“You could have come another day,” Dunsi said.

“No, I’ve decided to check on you today.” Mummy Grace sat on the wooden bench in the room’s corner. “Ever since you’ve packed into this apartment, I’ve not come to say hi.”

“That’s true, Ma.” Dunsi turned to face Ariyo. “Please get Auntie a cup of water.”

Ariyo dashed to the kitchen and filled a plastic cup with water before handing it to Mummy Grace. She couldn’t help but stare in amusement as she watched Mummy Grace’s esophagus pop up and down as she swallowed.

Ariyo returned to bed and eavesdropped on Mummy Grace and her mother conversing in Yoruba. Their discussion eventually turned to Segun.

“Why could he have done such a thing?” Mummy Grace asked.

“It’s over, ma. Let’s leave this issue, please,” Dunsi replied.

Mummy Grace sighed, clasped her hands on her thighs, and shifted her gaze toward Ariyo. “*Ehn, ehn*, would you mind if Ariyo spent the school break at my house?”

Ariyo wanted desperately to stay with Mummy Grace. Right there on the bed, she prayed silently that her mother would consent.

“Only if she impresses me again by securing the top spot at the end of the term,” was Dunsi’s response. “If not, she will attend holiday tutorial classes.” Dunsi peered toward Ariyo, whom she thought was sleeping.

That night, Mummy Grace slept on the bed with Ariyo while Dunsi slept on the floor mat with Tobi and Itunu. The following day, Mummy Grace left by sunrise, but only after she handed Dunsi two thousand naira and reminded her of their earlier conversation regarding Ariyo.

That term, Ariyo studied diligently. Each night, as the lamp’s soft glow diminished, she would light a candle to continue reading her schoolbooks. When the term ended, she emerged as the top-ranked student.





# RESOURCES

## PART FOURTEEN



## BEYOND THE TEARS: RESOURCES FOR SURVIVORS

You are not alone. You are a survivor. Though the ocean of tears may seem vast, know that you are not adrift. You possess the strength, resilience, and courage to navigate even the darkest waters. We offer these resources as a beacon of hope to guide you towards the calm shores of healing, peace, and empowerment.

Your strength and resilience shine through.

### **Nigerian Resources**

Women's Aid Collective (WACOL):

<https://wacolnigeria.org>

Mirabel Centre: <http://www.mirabelcentre.org>

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC):

<https://www.nigeriarights.gov.ng>

Project Alert: <https://projectalertnig.org>

### **U.S. Resources**

National Center on Domestic Violence,

Trauma & Mental Health: <https://ncdvtmh.org>

The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN):

<https://www.rainn.org>

The National Sexual Assault Hotline:

1-800-656-HOPE (US)

The National Domestic Violence Hotline:

1-800-799-SAFE (US)

## **International Resources**

The International Network of Women's Funds:

<https://prospera-inwf.org/feminist-funds-for-feminist-futures>

The Global Fund for Women:

<https://www.globalfundforwomen.org>

The Women's Learning Partnership:

<https://learningpartnership.org>

International Association for Forensic Nurses (IAFN):

<https://www.forensicnurses.org>









**Ololade Akinlabi** is a prose writer with a particular focus on themes related to gender relations and gender biases, as well as a poet with poems featured in various international journals and magazines.

Ololade's latest work is the adult fiction novel *Ocean of Tears* – a purposeful story exhibiting the realities of gender violence against women. Through his work, Ololade hopes to amplify the voices of women whose stories and experiences related to gender-based violence and biases are too often misrepresented or ignored, particularly throughout largely patriarchal societies.

When not writing, Ololade enjoys reading African novels by authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Ayi Kwei Armah. He currently resides in Ibadan, Nigeria, where he imparts his knowledge of social issues as a teacher.

Ololade is the 2018 winner of the Ken Egba Poetry Prize by Poet award and the 2017 Nominee for the Writer's Award in Nigeria.

