

LOVE

Dennis stood out, staring at the moon, and the silvery cotton candy clouds glided across the sky. To her dismay, it was starless. She turned away from the scenery with a shiver and sigh, heading to her room.

She opened the door to the room, shocked. The bedroom door opened up, revealing a trail of roses on the white porcelain tiles, moving up to the wide bed where it stopped in a heart symbol. The scented candles lined either side of the trail of rose petals, giving off an atmosphere that would make Aphrodite proud.

The curtains, though shut together, danced from the open windows, playing with the lit up candles around that served as the only source of light in the room. Her reaction to the changes the room bore in her absence sent shockwaves through her. She stooped low to pick a couple of petals in her hand, and let them fall away. Of course, what had she expected? Slowly, she started towards the side table that held a blue patterned China vase, filled up with roses, dahlias, amaryllises and others she couldn't recognise.

It was obvious Gbenga had outdone himself and couldn't help but chuckle at one in particular. Besides, she was the only one in the room—he had noticed the peeps at flower stalls while they took strolls downtown. She was sure the admiration was subtle but guess it wasn't. Much to her disdain, tears walked down her face, ruining her makeup in two long lines—smudges of mascara to begin.

"I thought we were supposed to celebrate this anniversary tears free. Guess I was wrong," a voice said from behind her. She shivered lightly as his hands rested over her shoulder.

She sniffed. "How—How did you—?"

"Oh! This magical room? Poofed itself into existence, which means that I have no idea how it got here."

She turned, hitting him lightly on the chest. "Jokes apart," she said. Her emotions betrayed her, granting her a wobble response.

His eyes went grave. "I really didn't plan on making you cry."

"Seems you finally did," she laughed heartily. Gbenga's face softened. Then he licked his lips, pulling her in, closer when he sighed. "Sometimes, I wonder how I got married to this beautiful Drama Queen." He placed his forehead on hers, letting his eyes flutter shut.

"Thank you," she whispered, finding his hands on his sides and linking it to hers.

His lashes tickled her face as he opened his eyes again. "When will this be done? Let's say in another 10 or 15 years, I'm sure I'd be betting for an even bigger crybaby. Oh well, you'll remain my crybaby."

"You can stop teasing. You're making me blush and smile like a 15-year old. I don't like it." She pouted.

Gbenga stroked her cheek. "I've heard I have that effect on people. Good to know it works on you too. Was beginning to think you were immune to my charm."

"You must be satisfied that I'm not."

"Precisely."

Seven years down the line, she could hear Gbenga pledge his love for her on that altar. She waited for the change but it never came. She, ab initio, had thought it was a matter of time before he rained fire and brimstone on her. When she asked two years later: "I married you. Not kids. If they decide to come, good for us. If not, we've got time to ourselves," was the reply with a wicked grin.

Nonetheless, she tried. Tried to make him happier. Happier as a father. There were low chances for the couple to conceive a child, the doctor had told them on one of the numerous visits to the clinic. Another 6-8 times of artificial insemination had failed them. All vain. Yet in all, he comforted her. He'd hold her like she was his world, the air. He was everything she wanted and that was where she realised: No marriage is 'perfect'. Definitely none. Marriage is simply two 'flaw-full' humans coming together to build a 'flawless' home. Less didn't mean no flaws. It just meant little of the flaws were present there. Only a little.

Of course she had tried to give him that joy. Tare, Gbenga's baby brother didn't understand that when he flaunted his kids at family get-together, making mention of achievements she sulked about. Neither did Gbenga's parents that kept breathing down her neck when a year of marriage hadn't resulted in a grandchild.

The pain filled her heart but she didn't want to cry. She couldn't do that to him. Make him feel bad on their special day.

Gbenga put a hand under her chin, watching her share in his well of happiness. It was right there in his eyes that he knew. He knew even without her saying a word. He twirled her around then pulled her close to himself.

"To many more years of life's-annoying-flaws-but-we-will-overcome-them home."
Dennis smiled, "To many more years."

~Jescil Richard ~