



# DEAR MORENIKE

THE SEQUEL TO DEAR OBAJIMI

SHARON ABIMBOLA SALU

# Dear Morenike

THE SEQUEL TO DEAR OBAJIMI

BY

SHARON ABIMBOLA SALU

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## **DEAR OBAJIMI**



**Dear Obajimi** is the original short story, which precedes **Dear Morenike**. This free ebook is available on [SharonSalu.com](http://SharonSalu.com), as well as these online retailers:

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**Synopsis:** After the mysterious disappearance of her husband, a woman writes a series of letters in a desperate attempt to make sense of the calamity of a missing spouse. These letters provide insight into the life the couple lived before Obajimi's disappearance and the hurricane of changes that occur while the Police investigate. By the last letter, will she discover what happened to her husband?

## DEAR MORENIKE

My New Abode  
City of Lagos

September 9, 1998

Dear Morenike:

I warned you.

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

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

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

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

Another reason? Oh yes. For the past two weeks I have persistently tried to get in touch with you to no avail. I have been to the house, our former home, but the gateman, the man whose salary I paid for months, refused to let me in. He even had the audacity to tell me that I was no longer allowed in that compound. Obviously, he was acting on your instructions. Don't even try to deny it, Morenike because this has your name written all over it. That vindictiveness is a classic Morenike move.

Why won't you answer my calls? The moment you hear my voice on the other end of the line, you hang up. Even my parents have been denied access to you, Morenike.

So you have reduced me to writing a letter, something I haven't done since our university days. Back then, things were different. I wrote you love letters, which you never replied.

Remember those days? The days when you played hard to get and I tripped over myself, pulling out all the stops just to win your heart. Morenike, you were the prize that for the longest time was absolutely unattainable, forever out of my reach.

Until the day you gave in.

Do you remember what I told you the first week we started dating? Let me refresh your memory. I said:

"Morenike, I'm not the marrying type."

And you said: "Yeah right. We'll see about that."

You thought I was joking, but I was serious. I never hid who I was from you. So, you can't pretend at this stage that you're a victim. You knew my reservations concerning marriage and yet you still said "I do" to me.

By the end of this letter, I want you to decide who the victim is: you, me or neither of us. Yes, "neither of us" is a plausible option.

Since my calls and attempts to see you have been met with rejection, I have come to this conclusion: the only way to reach you and explain myself is to use the same coping mechanism you used when you thought I was missing.

I'll write you a letter.

Let me shock you: forgiveness is not the end result I'm aiming for. My hope is that you'll understand the reasoning behind my actions and find peace within yourself. And yes, I have the audacity to express my desire that this letter will arm you with strength to move on as I have. Morenike, I want to offer you closure, to give you the peace of mind that seems to be missing from your letters, that seems to have evaded you since I left.

As far as I am concerned, that's my only true sin: leaving you with no explanation whatsoever. Maybe when you're done reading this, you'll see why I did it, why I felt that disappearing from your life was the best option for both of us.

Believe it or not, writing this letter has made me very nervous. Why? Because ultimately, I have to answer one question: why I left you.

The longest answer I ever wrote in response to a question was on my JSS2 exam. Yes, that far back.

The question was, "What is Marriage?" Simple enough, abi? Yet, in spite of all my cramming, once I saw that question, e be like say dem swear for me. A thousand ideas sprang up in my head, none of which had anything to do with the question. I knew I had to write everything I knew about marriage, and go beyond one or two sentences, because as you know, my father was a Social Studies teacher, and he would never have forgiven me if I had failed that question.

So, I gave it my best shot, throwing in everything including the kitchen sink.

In my answer, I described marriage as the union between a man and a woman and went on to describe the types of marriages I knew: monogamy, polygamy, polyandry and all the strange, partner-specific combinations I had discovered in my Social Studies textbook. There was something about that process of forcing myself to answer a question in my own words, crafting an answer relying heavily on fragments of memory mixed with large doses of common sense that changed the way I looked at marriage.

I know you're thinking, "So that's your excuse, right?" And my answer is "No."

My excuse is still coming.

I brought up that exam question not just because of the length of this letter, but also because the process I referred to is similar to what I'm doing here: using my own words and relying heavily on memories of our marriage to answer the question that's bigger than the elephant in the room: Why did I do it?

You'll see why, I assure you.

Speaking of elephants, I look at my handwriting and remember how often you laughed at me whenever you saw anything I had written by hand. You would tease me and say, "Jimi, I now know what an elephant's handwriting looks like. See as you've finished all the paper with this your ginormous handwriting. Haba!" It was the same recurring joke, but you always made it clear that you weren't calling me an elephant. Just my handwriting. Because that's just who

you are: a woman who cares deeply. But you care too much; perhaps, that is your own undoing. But 14 months of living with a woman who cared so much about others rubbed off on me, and that's another reason why I'm sitting at home on a weeknight, writing this letter. I need to show that I don't hate you; in fact, I care enough about you to tell the truth.

I look back now at that exam and realize I left out certain key phrases and buzzwords that could have really upped my score. But this knowledge is a product of experience; my personal marriage experience. I know now that in a real marriage, there is a place for love, trust and commitment.

But have you ever wondered, I mean, really wondered about a couple's performance in marriage? If a marriage is successful, who hands out grades? Prizes? Morenike, do you know who grades your performance in marriage?

No answer, right? I don't have one either.

But when a marriage fails, everyone reminds you that you scored a big fat "F." How do you measure the success of a marriage? In years spent together, in fruitfulness, in battles and challenges you overcome together as a team? Is marriage a pass or fail course or do marriages receive one of many letters grades: A, B, C, D or the dreaded F?

Morenike, think about it. I myself have spent countless hours dwelling on these matters.

Those things I mentioned – love, trust, commitment – look good on paper. They would certainly have looked good on a JSS2 boy's exam answers. But that's all theory. For a 29-year old man who has pledged his undying love to a woman in front of family, friends and complete strangers, people expect a lot more than theory. These values must be expressed, and that is where I failed you, Morenike.

I passed that exam in JSS2, but like I said, that was just "theory." When it came down to the practical aspects of marriage, I dropped the ball. Because no matter how well some things work out on paper or even in your head, reality is a different ball game entirely.

It took just a few paragraphs to answer that Social Studies question, but as you can see, it is taking a lot more to answer that nagging question, "Why did I leave you?"

It's funny how easy it is to admit my failures to you. You're one of the few people I could do that with: speak my mind in a "judgment-free" zone. Yet, I kept this thing that ate away at my soul from you.

Why?

Because it concerned you too. It wasn't just about me. Worse yet, it concerned something I knew you desperately wanted, but I didn't want to give you.

Maybe I'm one of those men who cannot stay married. Relationships are fine, but marriage? It stifled me, took my voice, my identity, and you didn't even notice.

I have heard of men who were "jazzed," caged by potent charms, the diabolical doings of desperate women: girlfriends who refused to let go, side chicks who wanted the coveted and elusive upgrade to wife status, wives who wanted more from their husbands than they were willing to give. But as much as I would love to use that excuse – oh, it would fit the bill perfectly – it's not the truth. The truth, Morenike, is like a large piece of yam stuck in your throat: difficult to swallow.

You know how sometimes evil thoughts cross your mind like cars speeding on the expressway. Initially, you push them away to make way for positive thoughts. There was a day when this particular thought arrived and it wasn't like the others; it didn't go away through sheer willpower. It was here for business. Maybe I wasn't emphatic enough, didn't make it clear that it wasn't welcome.

Or maybe on a subconscious level, I invited it. Regardless of why it had come, I allowed that thought germinate in my mind, fertilized with the idea of starting afresh with someone else, on my terms. I let it grow roots reaching down into my soul until what had at first been a strange thought became one with me.

The next step was action. I spent months preparing, putting everything together. Finally, when the day came, I got up and did what I had only imagined.

I left you.

The writing was on the wall, Morenike and at every turn, I expected you to stop me and ask what I was doing, demand to know what I was preparing for. Everything was, like they say, hidden in plain sight.

I started looking for a new place about five months ago. That search was partly what consumed my free time, including weekends. I know that in this Lagos, it is difficult for a woman to secure accommodation on her own. But you won't believe how many landlords simply assumed that Folashade and I were a couple. No one questioned our relationship status.

It tickled me to hear people call her "Mrs. Adigun," but I'll admit that hearing her respond to that name left me feeling odd. I'm not looking for a replacement wife, just a companion, someone who gets me and understands my need to remain unattached.

Folashade plays that role perfectly.

You may not know it, Morenike, but I have thought about you every single day since I left. Many times, I wanted to call and explain myself so you wouldn't worry about me. But there was also a need to leave things as they were.

Somewhere in my mind, it was easier to just walk away from you, from everything and step into a new life. I didn't want to go through the trouble of filing a divorce and dealing with all the baggage that comes with it. Yes, I took what appeared to be the easy road. But Folashade has convinced me to finish what I have started, to make permanent what has become a prolonged separation.

In time, I hoped you would forget me, presume me dead, perhaps. Now nko? I suppose it is safe to assume that I am dead to you.

To be honest, the thought of leaving this marriage came several times in the first few weeks after our wedding. I know we both read books assuring us that it was normal to expect friction in our first year of marriage because we were adjusting to each other.

But here's something I never told you: deep in my heart, I knew it wouldn't last. I knew that I was just playing a waiting game, that it was just a matter of time before we would go our separate ways. So, when the opportunity came, I grabbed it with both hands.

Remember the thought I mentioned earlier that I never chased away? This is what it was:

If you could change anything about your life, what would it be?

My answer was always the same: I would not get married.

Morenike, let me be clear: this is not your fault. My walking away had nothing to do with what you said or did. I just didn't see myself growing old with you.

But, the thing that truly terrified me was having children with you, the woman I had no intention of spending forever with. The pressure from our parents did not help matters. All my siblings have children, except my younger brother who is still in the university. But, I couldn't bear the thought of having children who looked like you. No, Morenike, I don't hate you. It's just that I understand my heart at a far deeper level than you ever will. That's just who I am. You can't change me.

I played with the idea of separation, even divorce, but I knew you wouldn't let go so easily. You're very persuasive, I'll give you that. I knew that if you caught a whiff of my "escape plan," you would talk me out of it. You would convince me to stay and work things out like you did all those times in school when we broke up only to make up again.

So I made a selfish decision; I chose to do what made me happy.

You can't imagine my relief when I left my car on Third Mainland Bridge and hitched a ride with a taxi to the new place Folashade and I had secured. Sure, I felt some guilt but it was outweighed by my desire for something better, something that was not this prison called marriage.

Let me be clear: I don't want to be married. Not to you, not to anyone.

Folashade understands and accepts that about me. Unlike you. All you ever tried to do was change me, even though I let you know who I was from Day one. But I wasn't exactly forced to do anything. We were both adults for goodness sakes. I went with the flow, hoping that somehow you would be the remedy, the ultimate cure to this commitment phobia that has plagued me for years.

You may think I'm a monster, a heartless, unfeeling person, but we all know perception and reality are not the same thing.

Folashade, the lady you saw with me at Ariya Gardens is very much like you: a relic from my past. I have known her since my days at NYSC Ilorin. The first day she laid eyes on me, she said:

"You look like an Andrew, and that's what I'll call you."

So, I became known as Andrew throughout my service year. That's Folashade for you: bold, decisive and I should add, quite charismatic. Everyone in Ilorin started calling me Andrew thanks to Folashade who became my "Ilorin girlfriend." Of course, there's a need to distinguish because back in Lagos, I, Obajimi had only one steady girlfriend. Her name was Morenike.

Yes, while you waited for me in Lagos, I was playing a very long "away match" with Folashade, who was my equal in every way; she even shared my commitment phobia. She left me right before NYSC ended for some guy she met who was, in her words, "more loaded in every department" than I was. I was hurt, but I didn't blame her. I would have done the same thing in her shoes. Perhaps, that's what I admired about her: the fact that she was comfortable being herself. She had no desire to be anyone else but Folashade. I'll admit that type of self-assurance and confidence in a woman is irresistibly sexy.

But Folashade made her choice, and it wasn't me.

However, she accepted me just as I was, did not try to change me, something you actively pursued the entire time we were together.

So, when I ran into Folashade some months ago, around the same time the thought of not being married to you had taken root, it was the possibility of re-kindling what we had, of starting over with someone who truly understood and accepted me that spurred me on, armed with the type of courage I hadn't known before.

I saw her at a boutique where I was looking for a birthday gift for you. I told her I was buying a gift for my sister, and asked her to help me pick the perfect gift. And she chose that dress that you raved so much about, the blue dress you told me receives many compliments whenever you wear it. Yes, you have Folashade to thank for that dress. All I did was pay for it.

I remember what you said in Ariya Gardens as I dragged Folashade away from you:

"Pasan ti won fi na iya ile ni won ma fi na iyawo."

Let me translate so we're on the same page: the cane used to flog the senior wife will also be used to flog the junior wife; or in my case, the cane used to flog the old wife will be used on the new one. So this is what you think, that whatever problems the ex-wife faced will be encountered by the new wife. That's what you meant, right?

But that's where you've got it all wrong.

You see, Folashade like me, isn't the marrying type. She has never, not for one day, mentioned the word, "marriage" to me. She is one of those rare women who are content with the status quo, which in our case is a relationship where each partner is free to come and go as they please. So you see, this proverb has no place in the relationship Folashade and I have since she will never be my iyawo.

And she knows it.

Morenike, in all this, I don't want you to blame yourself for my leaving.

I believe marriages exist even where at least one party has misgivings, second thoughts so to speak about the sustainability of that marriage. Yes, in spite of commitment issues, some marriages still stand. But the quality of existence is questionable. And that is what I believe happened to us.

Of course, I'm the one who had one leg in and another one out for the most part. You were clear about where you stood and maybe that unflinching loyalty isn't meant to be wasted on a man like me who cannot reciprocate.

But Morenike, does it matter? What our marriage has become is another glorified "break" in a long chain of "breaks." Except that, like I said before, this time, I'm not coming back.

Remember those breaks we took while we were dating? Didn't you ever wonder why I was always the one who asked us to "take a break?" Initially, you would challenge me, but eventually, you would let it go.

But being married is different; you can never take a break from marriage. And in a healthy marriage, why would you? It's a seamless, unbroken chain of events, experiences shared with the person you've chosen to spend the rest of your life with. I broke that chain the day I walked out on you. On us. But to do so successfully, the chain had to be weak, wouldn't you agree? What weakened our marriage, you ask.

Children.

Yes, I'm bringing this up again.

You always wanted children. You told me so many times. But me? I wasn't keen on it. Have you never wondered why I avoided the subject so much? Here's the truth in black and white: I couldn't bear the thought of having a child who looked like the woman I planned to leave. That particular thought haunted me to the point of triggering panic attacks. You didn't notice that it was after that first conversation about having kids that I started taking anxiety pills? I told you those pills were for work stress but they were actually for the panic attacks. It was all that talk of having babies that brought it on. You asked for honesty, Morenike.

There you go.

To look into the eyes of a child and know what you did to its mother ... that possibility haunted me and it was what made me seriously consider leaving you for good.

So, why did we go and see Pastor about our child bearing issues? Because I knew that was what you wanted. Admit it, Morenike: I know you. When you zone in on something you really want, everything else is almost invisible.

You were so focused on having children, you didn't notice the finishing touches I was putting to my preparations for the life I planned to start without you. The money I usually contributed to our joint account, I reduced significantly, telling you that I was saving it for a new business, the possibilities of which I was still exploring. My car, which was in dire need of repairs, and which I actually had the money to fix, remained in that "close to quenching" state which ought to have irritated anyone else. But because I knew the fate that awaited it, I put up with it.

"You're destined for Third Mainland Bridge," I would say to it sometimes. Yes, even the car knew about my plans. But you, Morenike, were none the wiser.

Some of the money I saved, I used to buy what Folashade called a "brand new Tokunbo" car, an obvious contradiction, considering the fact that the car was used and the only thing new about it was the owner.

I bought new clothes just a few weeks before I left, but never wore them till after I had left you. Not to mention my increased nervousness around you.

Morenike, the warning signs were there, but you were simply oblivious to them. There were days when I wanted to break down and confess everything to you, and stay back to fight for our marriage. But the thought of being married to one person for the rest of my life, of growing old and not exploring any more options ... That was one of the thoughts that kept me from opening up to you, kept me from revealing the secret intentions of my heart.

And I know you're a fighter, Morenike. I knew that if I told you, you would convince me that our marriage was worth saving, worth fighting for, when all I could see were dusty ashes. I had mentally checked out of our marriage long before I physically left. All I did for months was keeping appearances.

I knew I couldn't tell my parents. They would point to a spiritual reason for what they would more than likely consider an anomaly. I knew they would be devastated, but I knew and was comforted by the thought that they would not be kept in the dark for longer than was necessary. So, don't blame them for my actions. They didn't know either.

I felt it was time to think of my own happiness for once, rather than what I had done for years: putting other people's emotions, needs, wants, desires above and before my own personal happiness.

How could I explain to my parents that I was terrified of the monotony, the blandness, the routine that marriage presented? That I craved variety and didn't want to always wake up to the same face every morning. See, Folashade gets it. She understands that she is my "right now" not my "always and forever."

I know you're sick and tired of hearing me talk about her, but she's as much a part of my present and foreseeable future as much as you're a concrete part of my past.

So, how did I do it, you might wonder. In your eyes, for a man to do what I have done, his conscience must be bloodied, bludgeoned, beaten to a pulp. But not me. I haven't gone that far.

After all, I didn't kill anyone.

I still have a conscience, Morenike, but as I write, it's gagged, bound up and locked away in an airless, windowless room.

Nobody forced me to marry you. I just made a regrettable mistake and dragged you into it. When we stood at the altar and it was time to say, "I do," I should have run out of that church and never looked back. I would have spared my beautiful bride the heartache of a broken

marriage. Yes, even at that point, if I had been true to myself, all we would have had between us would have been a broken engagement.

But, I chose to believe that maybe I could change, that maybe there was something special about marriage that cures the wandering heart of a man, and makes it conform to society's high "responsible and committed husband" standard.

However, these many months of marriage have opened my eyes and heart to this truth: marriage simply isn't for me. Maybe this decision to end our marriage is premature, and perhaps in my 40s or 50s when I'm a senior bachelor, I'll be a different man, a man who sees and appreciates the value of marriage.

But right now, I'm enjoying my freedom.

And now, I want to set you free too.

My lawyer will contact you shortly with the divorce papers. You'll see that I've been fair. You deserve to be free, as I am, free to choose your own happiness with a man who will commit to loving you with the matched intensity of your own devotion.

I assume that such men still exist. My name simply isn't on that list.

I hope you'll be happy again. Let's talk soon like mature adults. Remember, don't blame yourself. I made a choice I had no business making and I'm trying to reverse the effects while there's still time.

Perhaps, one day, you'll thank me. I suspect that day lies in the distant future.

Sincerely,

The Man Who Was Formerly "Your" Obajimi

###

## **THANK YOU FOR READING**

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

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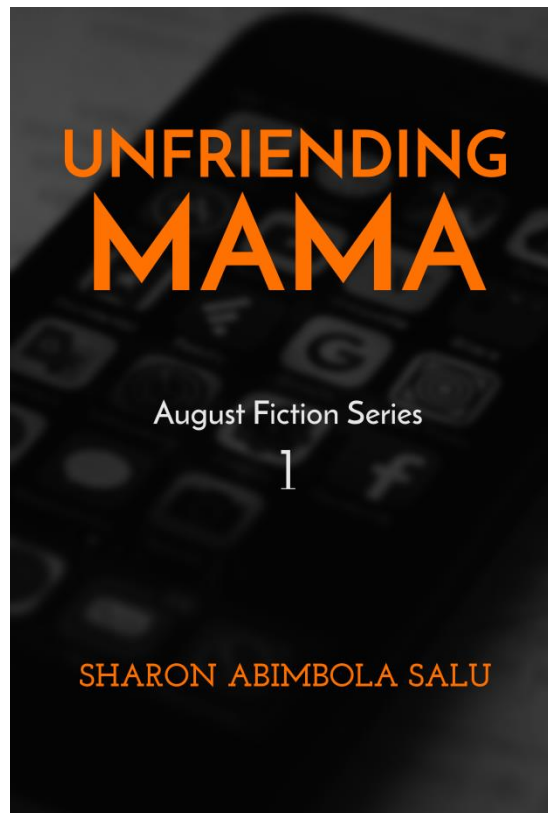
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Thanks again. I appreciate your support!

Keep reading for an excerpt from [Unfriending Mama](#), available now.

## UNFRIENDING MAMA



The first time Mama wrote on my wall, I was at work, in the middle of a painfully boring meeting. My phone, which was set to vibrate mode, lay beside a stack of paper I had hurriedly grabbed on my way to the conference room. Although a pen lay within reach, I had no intention of taking notes.

No.

The paper stunt was for my boss. If she felt I was unprepared, she would hound me for days after the meeting, making jabbing remarks about rising unemployment and how disposable junior employees were.

Thanks to a useful tip from Raymond, a fellow colleague and former victim of hers, I had learnt to appear at meetings armed with a small pile of useless documents and writing implements. All this *efizi* just to prove that my place in the office was not up for grabs anytime soon.

The notification showed that a certain Adenike Omotosho had just written on my wall.

“Adenike Omotosho?” I said, under my breath. “There’s only one person I know with that name,” I thought. And then I remembered the strange thing that happened the night before. Mama joined Facebook and added me as a friend.

Although I spoke with my mother every day, I had not foreseen her joining Facebook. Ever. And even when she joined, I expected her Facebook name to be “Mama Dekunle,” which is what most people called her, or simply, Mama. Seeing her official name displayed online within my circle of friends still shocked me.

Little did I know that more surprises awaited me.

**[READ THE FULL STORY](#)**

## **About the Author**

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

## **Contact Sharon**

E-mail: [sharonwritesfiction@gmail.com](mailto:sharonwritesfiction@gmail.com)

Web: [www.SharonSalu.com](http://www.SharonSalu.com)

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