SINGLE DAD DIARIES



BY ADEPEJU ADEWUSI

FATHERS DON'T ALWAYS LEAVE. SOMETIMES, THEY'RE THE ONES WHO STAY.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my son, Legend.

You are the reason I kept going, the reason I refused to give up, the reason I found strength when I had none left. Every sacrifice, every struggle, every late night and early morning was for you.

I pray that as you grow, you always know how deeply you are loved, how fiercely you are protected, and how much you have always meant to me. You are my greatest blessing, my proudest achievement, and my reason for everything.

This book is also for every single father who stayed, who fought, who showed up when no one else did. For the parents who chose love over abandonment, responsibility over escape. You are not alone. Your love matters. Your presence is everything.

—Peju

Foreword

This book is not just my story—it's a story for every father who has been left to raise a child alone. It's a story for every person who has ever felt abandoned, lost, or forced to rebuild from nothing. It's a story of resilience, of pain, of love, and ultimately, of growth.

When I became a single father, I had no roadmap. No guide. No blueprint for how to navigate the struggles ahead. I was thrown into the deep end, expected to figure it out, expected to keep going despite the weight of uncertainty pressing down on me. This book is the truth of that journey—raw, unfiltered, and real.

Society often paints men as the ones who leave, as the ones who abandon their families, but my story is proof that the reverse happens too. I want to challenge the narrative that single fathers are rare, that men can't nurture, that we aren't capable of raising our children with the same love and devotion as a mother.

I wrote this book for my son, Legend. One day, when he's old enough, he will read these words and understand everything. He will know that he was always

loved, always wanted, and that no matter what life threw at us, I never gave up on him.

To every single parent out there—to every father fighting to be present, to every mother doing it alone, to every child who has ever felt unwanted—this book is for you. May it serve as a reminder that love, consistency, and showing up every day will always matter more than the ones who choose to walk away.

—Peju

Chapter 1: The Wait

Chapter 2: The Arrival

Chapter 3: Nowhere to Call Home

Chapter 4: The Cold Reality

Chapter 5: Building From Scratch

Chapter 6: The Illusion of Hope

Chapter 7: A Taste of Something New

Chapter 8: A Mother's Return

Chapter 9: The Divorce

Chapter 10: A New Beginning

Chapter 11: The Weight of Parenthood

Chapter 12: Letter to Legend

INTRODUCTION

Being a single dad wasn't in my life plan. I didn't grow up dreaming about school pickups, potty training disasters, or bedtime stories. But here I was, raising a little human, figuring things out one mistake at a time. This book is about the journey —about failing, learning, laughing, and somehow making it work.

One day, I thought I had a partner—a woman I loved, the mother of my child. The next, she was gone, not by choice, not by an argument, but by handcuffs and a prison sentence for a crime she committed before we ever met. One moment, we were a family. The next, I was standing there, holding our son, realizing I was completely alone.

Even though I saw it coming & I was very much aware of her past, I never expected what was coming next. And when the truth finally caught up to her, she didn't just lose her freedom—she left me with a baby, no plan, no help, and no idea what the hell I was doing.

There was no time to process it. No time to be angry or heartbroken. My son didn't care that his mother had just been taken away. He still needed to be fed. He still needed his diaper changed. He still needed someone to hold him at night. And that someone was me.

I had no support. No family stepping in. No guidebook on how to do this alone. Just me, a tiny human, and the overwhelming feeling that I wasn't ready for any of this.

But ready or not, I had no choice.

This book isn't just about the struggles. It's about resilience. It's about stepping up even when you're scared. It's about the hard days, the funny moments, and the lessons I learned the hard way. If you're a single dad, if you've ever felt like you were drowning in responsibilities, or if you just want to know what it's really like to raise a kid alone—this is for you.

Because being a single dad isn't about having all the answers. It's about showing up, every single day, no matter what.

Chapter 1: The Wait

I always thought the hardest part of becoming a single dad would be doing it alone. I was wrong. The hardest part was waiting.

When his mother was sentenced, my whole world fell apart. One day, I was a father with shared responsibilities. The next, I was the only parent left. But while I was trying to make sense of it all, my son was thousands of miles away, living with his uncle in the U.S. He was coming to live with me in the UK, but I had no idea what that would look like.

And worse—how do you prepare for something like that when your own life is in pieces?

At the time, I had nothing. No job, no home of my own, no stable routine. When his mother got sentenced, I quit my job—I wasn't in the right headspace to work. How could I focus when my entire future had just changed overnight? At this point I was crashing at my sister's place. I told myself it was temporary, but deep down, I knew I had no plan.

I was already struggling to take care of myself, and now I was about to take care of a child. My child.

I felt like a failure before I even started.

The call came quietly, but it changed everything.

"*The judge gave me 18 months,*" she said, her voice unsteady. "*I have to turn myself in.*"

I gripped the phone tighter. "*Where is our son?*"

"*I took him to say goodbye,*" she whispered. "*I held him. I kissed him. I told him I loved him.*"

She paused, and I could hear her breathing, trying to hold back tears.

"*But he doesn't understand,*" she continued. "*He just looked at me. No questions. No words. Just those little eyes staring at me like nothing was wrong.*"

I felt my chest tighten. He wasn't old enough to talk yet. He wasn't old enough to ask why his mother was crying, why she was holding him so tightly. He wasn't

old enough to understand that when she walked away, she wouldn't be coming back—not for a long time.

"*And then I had to leave,*" she said, her voice breaking. "*I left him with my friend. I didn't want him to see me walk away.*"

I wanted to be angry. I wanted to scream at her for making this choice, for leaving me to pick up the pieces. But what was the point? It wouldn't change anything. She was already gone.

"*Take care of him,*" she whispered.

"*I will.*"

And then the line went silent.

I put the phone down, took a deep breath, and realized—I was all he had now. The moment I found out he would be sent to me, I wanted to be on the first plane to the U.S. to bring him home myself. That's what a father should do. But life wasn't that simple. I had just applied for my British Passport, and that meant I was stuck in the UK. No travel. No way to be there for my own son.

I hated it. I hated knowing he was in a different country, probably confused, wondering why his dad wasn't coming for him. I hated that I had to rely on someone else—his uncle—to bring him to me. Not because I didn't trust him, but because it wasn't how it was *supposed* to be.

Fathers are supposed to be there. To hold their child's hand when they're scared. To reassure them that everything is going to be okay. But instead, I was forced to sit and wait.

I tried to talk to my son as much as I could while he was in the U.S., but how do you explain something like this to a child?

He was too young to fully understand, but I knew he was confused. Sometimes, when I called, he would just listen in silence. No words, no questions—just quiet breathing on the other end of the line. He was waiting for me to fix everything, but he couldn't say it. And that silence crushed me.

My sister never said it out loud, but I could tell she was worried. Every time she looked at me, I saw it in her eyes—the doubt, the concern. One night, after my son had gone to sleep, she finally said it.

"*Are you sure you can do this?*"

I wanted to get angry, to tell her she didn't understand, but the truth was, I wasn't sure. I had no job, no home of my own, no experience raising a child alone. But what choice did I have? I couldn't let him down.

So I just nodded and said, "*I have to*."

I did what I could to prepare. My sister helped, but I knew this wasn't her responsibility—it was mine.

I was sleeping in my niece's room at the time so I tried to make it look as masculine as I could for him. It wasn't much. No fancy nursery, no perfectly decorated room, just a bed and a few things I could afford. I walked through stores, second-guessing everything. Did he like dinosaurs or cars? Would he be scared of the dark? What kind of food did he eat?

Every little decision felt massive because I was starting from scratch. I had missed time with him. He had grown without me there. And soon, I'd have to learn everything all at once.

At night, when the noise of the day settled, the doubts crept in. What if I wasn't enough? What if he didn't feel at home with me? What if he resented me for not coming to get him myself?

I wasn't just becoming a full-time dad—I was becoming *the only* parent he had. That realization weighed on me. I couldn't be the backup plan, the fun weekend dad, or the one who just "helped out." I had to be everything. And I didn't know if I could do it.

Then, one day, I got the message: "He is on his way."

It was happening. No more waiting. No more time to prepare. Just the reality that, in a few hours, I would have a little boy standing in front of me, looking to me for everything.

I took a deep breath and whispered to myself the same thing I would later say to him countless times:

"*We'll figure it out together.*"

Chapter 2: The Arrival

The moment had arrived. The phone rang, jarring me awake from a restless sleep. I squinted at the screen—an unknown number. Groggy and half-asleep, I answered.

"Hello?"

"Is this the father of Legend? This is immigration at Heathrow Airport."

My stomach dropped. I sat up instantly, heart racing. "Yes, that's me. Is everything okay?"

"Your son just arrived, but there's an issue. He has a one-way ticket, and his uncle has a return ticket. We need to clarify his entry status."

I felt a wave of panic. "He's my son. He's moving here permanently. I'm his legal guardian."

The officer was silent for a moment. "Hold on," she said. Fifteen agonizing minutes later, she confirmed my status and granted them entry.

From the airport, we went to a hotel I had booked for his uncle. I let my son sleep for a while before changing him into winter clothes and heading home. As we got downstairs, I looked at him and said, "It's just me and you now, buddy. We'll figure things out one day at a time."

I was a club promoter at the time, and the night he arrived was my first big gig. I rushed to the club to check on things, then headed home. I fed him, bathed him, and put him to bed before heading out. The event was packed, but then my phone rang—my sister. "He woke up crying for you."

At that moment, my freedom was gone.

The next day, I quit the club scene. I didn't hesitate. I didn't second-guess. My son needed me, and I couldn't afford to be distracted. But quitting the nightlife meant giving up a part of my identity. No more loud music, no more packed venues, no more fast money. Just me and him, figuring out a new life together.

He struggled to sleep, jetlagged and restless. I felt helpless—I didn't know what he liked, how to comfort him. I had to step in as both mom and dad. And even

though we were staying with my sister, I felt completely alone. She wasn't helpful at all. In fact, she often left her daughter with me. I was raising two kids instead of one.

And then, one day, she told me we had to leave. She claimed her bills had increased, that us being there was interfering with her love life. I knew it was just an excuse—she couldn't handle having a baby around.

I sat in silence after my sister told me to leave, staring at the walls that had once felt like a temporary refuge. Now, they were just another place we weren't welcome.

I looked over at my son, curled up on the floor, fighting sleep. He had no idea what had just happened. No idea that, once again, his world was shifting. He had already lost his mother. He had left behind everything familiar. And now, the one place he thought was home wasn't ours anymore.

I felt anger, shame, and fear all at once. I wanted to scream, to demand why life had put us in this position. But none of that would change the reality.

I had no job. No money. No home.

For the first time, the weight of it all crushed me. I felt like I was drowning, suffocating under the pressure of being responsible for this little boy who had no one else.

But then he turned to me, rubbing his tired eyes, and reached out his tiny hand.

And just like that, everything became clear.

I could be angry. I could be scared. But none of that mattered—because quitting wasn't an option.

I scooped him up and held him close.

"*We'll figure it out, buddy,*" I whispered. "*I promise*."

It didn't matter how lost I felt. I would find a way. Because now, it was just me and him.

And I refused to fail.

chapter 3: Nowhere to Call Home

When my sister told us to leave, I had nowhere to go. No money, no plan, no backup. The only person who would take us in was my cousin—but his place wasn't exactly welcoming. He was already living with his pregnant wife, who was due any moment, and his mum, all packed into a tiny two-bedroom apartment. And now, here I was, squeezing myself and my son into their already crowded home. We slept on the couch, night after night, with no space to call our own.

Moving in with my cousin was supposed to be a temporary fix. But temporary doesn't feel temporary when you're sleeping on a couch in a cramped two-bedroom apartment.

There was no space for my son to play. The living room, which became our bedroom, was always occupied. The TV was on until late at night, sometimes past eleven, and we had to wait for everyone to sleep before we could finally lay down. Bedtime was a battle—exhausted, but with no quiet space of our own, he would toss and turn, struggling to adjust.

Every morning, we had to wake up early to bathe and get ready before the rest of the house stirred. The bathroom was shared, and we had to be quick. I remember rushing to get him dressed while balancing the reality of living in a space that wasn't ours.

The atmosphere in the house was a bit tense. His wife, heavily pregnant and uncomfortable, wasn't too thrilled about extra people in the house. Even though she was very nice & polite, I could see the exhaustion in her eyes, the frustration in her voice when space got too tight. His mum, though kind, was also stretched thin—already battling some medical issues & also navigating the stress of an upcoming grandchild. And then there was me, feeling like an intruder, trying to act like I didn't notice how inconvenient we were.

I used to cry myself to sleep. Not just because of the physical exhaustion, but because I felt like I was failing him. I had wanted so much more for him, for us. And yet, here we were—crammed into a space that wasn't ours, trying to make the best of something that felt unbearable.

I wondered if things would ever get better. If we would ever have a home of our own. If I was strong enough to keep going.

But every morning, I got up. I held my son a little tighter. And I reminded myself—we had no choice but to keep moving forward.

Not too long after we moved in, my passport arrived, and my first line of action was to apply for housing assistance. I got two options: a rundown council flat in a very rough area in London or a very nice house outside London.

I didn't want my son growing up in no "*mandem*" area, and I also knew the London life was going to be very hard to keep up as it's very expensive, so I moved all the way to St. Helens—a little town not too far from Liverpool. A place where I had never heard of before and I knew no one.

Leaving London was hard. But after all the heartbreak, the humiliation, and the feeling of being a burden, I didn't mind the isolation. In fact, I welcomed it. I needed a fresh start, away from all the drama & b***s***.

As I packed up our few belongings and stepped onto that train to St. Helens, I felt the weight of uncertainty pressing down on me. I was moving to a place I'd never heard of, with no family, no friends, no safety net. But I had my son. And for him, I was willing to start over as many times as it took.

Chapter 4: A New Beginning

The first thing I noticed about St. Helens was how grey everything looked. The sky was heavy, thick with clouds that seemed to stretch endlessly. A damp chill clung to the air, seeping into my bones the second I stepped off the train. It wasn't just the weather—it was the quiet. The kind of quiet that made you feel like you were the only person in the world.

I stood there for a moment, gripping my son's small hand, looking around at the unfamiliar streets. The buildings looked worn, the streets emptier than I was used to. London had always been alive—loud, fast, full of people at all hours of the day. But here? It was like time moved slower, like the town itself was half-asleep.

Then, there were the accents. The first time someone spoke to me, I barely understood a word. The thick Scouse accent hit my ears like another language

entirely. The man at the taxi rank had asked me something, and I just stood there blinking, trying to piece together what he had said. After a few awkward seconds, I nodded and muttered a quiet "yeah," hoping it was an appropriate response.

As the taxi pulled away from the station, I stared out the window, feeling a knot form in my stomach. This was it—our new home. The streets blurred together as we passed rows of houses, shops, and pubs. It felt nothing like home, but I had to make it one.

The house itself was small but decent. Clean, warm, and most importantly, ours. It was the first time in a long time that I had a space that belonged to just me and my son. No couch surfing, no squeezing into someone else's life. Just us.

I used the little money I had on me to buy a mattress, some toiletries, and some kitchen utensils. The place was empty, cold, and unwelcoming. We had no washing machine, fridge, or couch for the first few months. The nights were brutal. We could barely afford to buy gas in the house, so we always had to wear our coats and like three layers of clothes inside just to keep warm. Sometimes, I'd wrap my son in my arms, trying to keep his tiny body from shivering as we lay on that bare mattress, the only piece of furniture in the house.

Hunger became our unwanted companion. A few times, I had to swallow my pride and go to the food bank, my heart sinking each time I walked through the doors, hoping I wouldn't see anyone I knew. Buying pampers was a struggle, and on the worst days, I had to ration food just so my son wouldn't go to bed hungry.

But the isolation hit me hardest. There was no one to call, no one to visit. I had spent my whole life in London, surrounded by people, noise, movement. Here, I felt like a ghost drifting through a place that wasn't mine. I had traded the chaos of the city for the silence of a small town, and I wasn't sure which was worse. The silence had a way of amplifying everything—the loneliness, the uncertainty, the weight of responsibility pressing down on me.

At night, memories of my old life flooded my mind. I thought about Nigeria, where I grew up surrounded by family, where there was always laughter, voices filling every room, food on the table, and people who cared. I had so many friends there, so much warmth, so much belonging. Then, London—the place where I had started building a life, where I was always out, always surrounded by people. The parties, the late nights, the music, the comfort of knowing I had people who would show up for me no matter what.

Now, here I was, alone. The contrast felt crushing. I used to have everything—friends, family, freedom. Now, I had nothing but responsibility, a mattress on the floor, and a little boy who depends on me for everything. I kept asking myself, "How did I end up here? How did everything change so fast?"

The only thing that kept me going—my only real escape—was her calls. Every day, I counted down the hours until she could use her ten-minute phone allowance from prison. That call was the highlight of my day, the only moment where I could talk freely, unload everything I was holding in. I made sure I never missed it. No matter how cold the house was, how empty my stomach felt, how tired I was from sleepless nights—I was always ready when the phone rang.

We talked about everything and nothing at the same time. She asked about our son, and I tried to make it sound like we were doing fine, even though my voice probably betrayed me. I told her how he was growing, how he was adjusting, how he had started recognizing me as his father. But I also told her about my struggles, about how lost I felt, about the crushing weight of doing this alone.

She listened. That was all I needed. Someone to listen, someone who understood. In those ten minutes, I didn't feel so alone.

But the moment the call ended, reality came crashing back. The cold, the hunger, the uncertainty—it was all still there, waiting for me. I sat on the floor every night, watching my son sleep, the sound of his steady breathing the only thing filling the empty house. The air was freezing, my stomach was empty, and my mind was racing. I had no idea how we were going to do this, how I was going to rebuild our lives from scratch.

I can remember his second birthday, a day that should have been filled with joy but was instead shadowed by struggle. I could barely afford a cake, but I made sure we celebrated. I bought him a nice outfit and took pictures of him, determined to make the day special despite our circumstances. I scraped together enough money to buy a small cake and took him out to a play centre. I watched him laugh and run around, his little face lighting up with joy, and I tried my best not to cry. That day, more than ever, I promised myself that no matter how hard things got, I would always find a way to give him moments of happiness.

That night, as I watched him sleep, I made a silent vow. No matter how hard things got, no matter how much I had to sacrifice, I would make sure he never felt the weight of our struggles the way I did. He deserved joy, stability, and a future brighter than the cold nights we were enduring.

I pulled the blanket over him, kissed his forehead, and whispered, “We’ll figure this out, buddy. One day at a time.”

And with that, I closed my eyes, holding on to the only thing keeping me going—the hope that tomorrow would be just a little bit better.

Chapter 5: Building From Scratch

Time slowly passed, and we began building our life piece by piece. Each day felt like a battle, but I kept pushing forward. My days were spent bathing him, cleaning up after him, and playing with him. Getting a job was nearly impossible. I had no support, no childcare, and no one to rely on. Every time I tried to plan for the future, reality pulled me back—rent, food, clothes, bills. Survival was the only thing on my mind.

But slowly, things started piecing together. He became of age and started going to school, which meant I was finally getting some small time to myself. That space, as little as it was, gave me a chance to breathe. I started going to the gym, and it made a huge difference in my mental health. The physical exhaustion was nothing compared to the weight I had been carrying in my mind, and for the first time in a long time, I felt like I was reclaiming a small part of myself.

As time went on, I was able to furnish the house bit by bit. No more sleeping on a mattress on the floor. No more struggling through freezing nights without proper heating. I saved up and got a small car as well—nothing fancy, but it gave me a sense of independence, a way to move freely without feeling trapped.

One of the biggest changes came when I joined a men's group at a church. I wasn’t sure what to expect at first, but I knew I needed some kind of support. I had spent so long feeling alone, carrying the weight of fatherhood and survival without anyone to share the burden with. Through that group, I was able to make some friends—men who understood struggles of their own, men who listened without judgment. For the first time in years, I felt like I belonged somewhere.

The road was still tough, but I could finally see progress. Life wasn't perfect, but it was moving forward. And for the first time, I started to believe that maybe, just maybe, things were going to be okay.

I finally managed to get a job, a night shift position at a warehouse. At first, I was relieved—work meant income, and income meant stability. But reality hit hard. The shifts were brutal—ten-hour nights of nonstop physical labor. By the time I got home in the morning, it was already time to take my son to school. I was running on empty, barely sleeping, barely functioning. The exhaustion became unbearable, but I kept pushing because I had no choice.

The biggest challenge, though, wasn't just the work—it was childcare. I was spending nearly everything I earned on babysitting. It felt like I was working just to pay someone else to watch my son while I was away. Soon, I realized the job wasn't working out. No matter how hard I tried to make it work, I was sacrificing too much and gaining too little. The sleepless nights, the constant fatigue, the endless cycle of working just to scrape by—it wasn't sustainable. Something had to change.

I'm not proud to say this, but there were nights when I had no choice but to leave him alone by himself. I hated it, but I was desperate. One night, I came home and found him curled up on the couch, waiting for me. He looked up at me with tired eyes, and in that moment, guilt hit me like a wave. I knew then that I had to stop. No job was worth this. No pay-check could justify the risk I was taking. I was supposed to be his protector, his safe place, and yet, I was failing him in ways I never thought I would. That night, I made a decision—I had to find another way.

So I started looking for proper jobs, determined to find something that would allow me to take care of my son without sacrificing his well-being. I did all sorts of training and gained certifications to boost my CV, knowing that my work experience from Nigeria alone wouldn't be enough. I applied for thousands of jobs every week. Maybe only two would reply, and even after an interview, I would never hear from them again. The rejections were discouraging, but I refused to give up. I kept praying and trusting God, believing that something would come through for us.

Eventually, I found a job. But it came with a heavy price. Around the same time, his mum had just gotten out of jail. Suddenly, I was faced with a choice—move back to the U.S. to reunite as a family, or stay and build on the life we had fought so hard to create. One path meant giving my son both parents, but at the cost of

uprooting everything we had established. The other meant stability, but keeping us apart from the only other person who had ever truly understood this journey.

I had a decision to make, and no matter what I chose, life as we knew it was about to change once again.

Chapter 6: The Crossroads

The decision weighed on me heavier than anything I had faced before. After everything we had been through, I finally had a job, a stable home, and a sense of security for my son. But now, with his mother free, the question of what came next loomed over me like a storm cloud.

Do I stay and continue building the life we fought so hard for, or do we move back to the U.S. and reunite as a family?

On paper, the choice should have been simple—give my son both his parents under one roof. But life wasn't that black and white. We had sacrificed so much to get to this point, and the idea of uprooting everything we had built terrified me. The thought of packing up, leaving behind the small stability I had clawed my way to, and walking into the unknown felt like stepping off a cliff with no parachute.

I spent countless nights thinking, praying, and weighing every option. Moving back would mean starting over—again. It would mean putting my trust in a relationship that had already been shattered by circumstances beyond our control. Would we be able to make it work? Would my son be better off with both of us, even if everything felt uncertain? Or was it better to hold onto the little stability we had created, even if it meant keeping us apart from her?

When she came out, she started acting very distant. I told myself to be patient, to give her space, to not push too hard. She had been through a nightmare of her own, and I couldn't expect her to walk out of prison and immediately pick up where we left off. But the more I reached out, the more she pulled away. It was subtle at first—the missed calls, the short replies, the disinterest in video chats. I convinced myself it was the time difference, the lack of privacy in the halfway house, the stress of rebuilding her own life. But deep down, I knew something was different.

She never really asked about our son. That cut the deepest. Two years had passed since she last saw him, and yet, there was no urgency in her voice, no longing to know how he was growing, what he liked, what made him laugh. I tried to ignore it, to make excuses for her, but reality was staring me right in the face.

I asked her what we could do to fix things. I was willing to throw everything away, to walk away from the life I had built, just to give my son his mother. I didn't care if we were homeless or had to start from scratch—I was ready to do whatever it took. But every time I brought it up, she dodged the conversation, changing the subject, avoiding commitment.

And then it hit me—she wasn't avoiding the conversation. She was avoiding the responsibility.

Prison had taken years from her, and now that she was free, she wasn't willing to trade that freedom for anything—not even for us. She had spent so long trapped in a cell that the thought of stepping into another kind of responsibility must have felt suffocating. I could hear it in her voice, see it in the way she danced around my questions. She wanted to move forward without looking back.

It crushed me. I had held onto hope for so long, believing that one day we'd be a family again, that our son would have his mother, that I wouldn't have to do this alone. But hope, I was learning, could be just as painful as loss.

In my desperation, I started considering everything. I thought about moving in with my best friend in Houston, even though I knew he was already overwhelmed with his own struggles. I thought about going to South Dakota to meet my father, a man I had never seen in my life, just to have some sense of family again. I was grasping at anything that could fill the void, anything that could make me feel like I wasn't failing my son.

Then, one day, I got a DM from a random account. The message was blunt, almost casual: *"She and that guy from the halfway house are sleeping together."*

My heart pounded as I read it over and over again, trying to make sense of it. The guy? The one who had been helping her? My mind raced, and my stomach turned. I told myself it was just a rumor, a lie from someone with nothing better to do. But I needed to hear it from her.

When I confronted her, she gave me a cock-and-bull story about how some other girl liked the guy, how she was just jealous and trying to ruin things between

them. It didn't make sense, and honestly, I don't think she even believed what she was saying.

That was the moment I knew.

I had been holding onto something that didn't exist anymore—maybe it never did. I needed her. I wanted us to be a family. But what I wanted didn't matter anymore.

Then she told me something else. She had started talking again to the ex—the same one she had been doing fraud with before she got locked up. She told me how they had reconnected while in prison, how he had promised to take care of her when she got out, and how he had even given her a car while she was still behind bars.

I would have loved to do all of this for her. I wanted to be the one who helped her, who made things easier. But I knew she was desperate. She was in survival mode, clinging to anything that would give her a sense of security. If I had forced us back into her life, we would have only made things worse for her.

And so, I had no choice but to let her be.

I sat there, staring at my phone, the weight of everything crashing down on me. The hope, the longing, the desperate need to fix what was already broken—it was all slipping through my fingers. I had spent so much time fighting for something she had already walked away from.

At that moment, I knew I had to let go. Not just of the idea of us, but of the pain of holding onto something that no longer existed.

I looked over at my son, sleeping peacefully, unaware of the storm raging inside me. He was the only thing that mattered now.

It was time to stop chasing a past that wasn't coming back.

It was time to move forward.

Chapter 7: A Taste Of Something New

Starting the new job was like stepping into another world. Everything changed overnight—our mornings, our evenings, our entire routine. Suddenly, I was waking up before the sun, rushing to get my son ready for school, and then heading straight into long commutes and exhausting shifts.

The early mornings were brutal. Some days, I barely had time to eat breakfast before getting out the door. The long drives to work felt endless, each mile stretching out as I mentally ran through the day ahead—drop him off, clock in at work, rush to pick him up, get home, cook dinner, and somehow find time to rest before doing it all over again.

One of the hardest parts was knowing my son was always the last to be picked up from school. I hated that feeling—the guilt of seeing him waiting there, small and tired, watching other kids run into their parents' arms while he sat alone. No matter how hard I worked, there was never enough time. I was always racing against the clock, always feeling like I was one step behind.

But I had no choice. This job was necessary, and I had to make it work. I had to find a way to balance it all, no matter how overwhelming it felt.

At first, the job was exciting because I got to dress up every day and leave the house. I started making friends again, feeling a sense of belonging and appreciation as part of a team. The money really changed things—I was finally able to start upgrading our lives. Slowly, I began renovating the house, making small improvements that made it feel more like a home. We were able to go out more on the weekends, enjoying moments together that had once seemed impossible.

Everything started adding up slowly, piece by piece, and for the first time in a long time, life felt like it was moving forward.

Soon after, I met a girl. It was very random. One evening, I went to the chippy shop to buy some groceries, and the minute I walked in, we locked eyes. Me being shy, I didn't say anything at first. In fact, I had already paid for my stuff and left, but as I was walking out, I suddenly remembered I had forgotten something.

Rushing back inside, I bumped into her, and she smirked before saying, "You just had to come back for me, yeah?"

In that instant, something electric surged through me. A fire that had long been extinguished suddenly reignited, shaking off years of exhaustion and loneliness. My heart pounded, my palms felt clammy, but for the first time in a long time, I felt *alive*.

The *Yoruba demon* in me took over, casting aside my usual hesitation. I played it cool, flashing a small smirk, exchanging a few playful words, but deep down, I already knew how this night was going to end.

Would you believe me if I told you that later that night, she came over to mine? That what started as a chance encounter turned into an *all-nighter* filled with rediscovered passion, laughter, and a connection I hadn't felt in what seemed like forever?

I could tell she wasn't the type to fall easily—especially being about five years older than me. She carried herself with grace, a proper lady in every sense, but there was something in her eyes, something curious, something hesitant yet intrigued. And I knew one thing for certain—she had never been with a Black man before.

She kept undressing me with her eyes every time we spoke, her gaze lingering, her breath hitching in ways she probably didn't even realize. And when things escalated, when barriers broke down, it was as if she had won the lottery. She never wanted me to put my clothes back on, and I wasn't about to argue.

I, on the other hand, had been celibate for almost two years. That night, all the built-up tension, all the longing, all the quiet nights alone—it all exploded between us. Our union was raw, urgent, and deeply physical. The only place we didn't make love that night was in my son's room. *Everything* else was fair game.

And for the first time in years, I didn't feel alone. My swagger came back, my confidence was restored. I felt *alive* again. Whenever we were apart, we were constantly texting, caught up in an endless exchange of flirtation and anticipation. I almost got in trouble a couple of times at work because I was always on my phone, but I didn't care. I was addicted to the feeling of being wanted again.

Soon after, she met my son, and it was love at first sight for both of them. You could tell he had fallen in love with women from his school, and seeing one in the house made him incredibly happy. Almost immediately, he started cuddling her,

his tiny hands wrapped around her as if he had known her forever. He was quick to take her to his room to show off all his toys, and just like that, she became his favorite person.

He didn't want me to bathe him anymore, didn't want me to put him to bed. She had stepped into a role he had been missing, and as much as it warmed my heart to see him so happy, it crushed me just as much. It was a reminder of what he had lost, what he had been missing all along. And deep down, I knew the hardest truth of all—this wasn't going to last forever.

Then one day, it hit me. *Who is this woman? Where do you even know her from? Haven't you learned from your mistakes?* I realized I was getting carried away again—falling in love with a woman who had slept in a stranger's house just hours after meeting him.

The minute I started asking the important questions, she slowly started pulling away. If I had kept quiet and left things casual, I'm sure we'd probably still be together. But me being an African man, mixed with all my insecurities, I had to let her know how I really felt.

At that point, it was more than just sex—it was about her being a mother figure to my son, a reliable companion. But after I approached her, I could tell I had put her under too much pressure. She wasn't ready for that kind of commitment. And just like that, it died a natural death—quick, silent, and inevitable.

I also couldn't deny that a part of me had always hoped my baby mama would come back. As much as I had tried to move on, that hope had always lingered in the background, making it easier for me to let go when things ended. And as if the universe was playing its own twisted game, it wasn't even a few weeks after we stopped talking that she reappeared—like a ghost from a past I had never been able to outrun. Just when I thought I had finally gained control of my life, she popped up out of nowhere, ready to turn my world upside down once again.

Chapter 8: A Mother's Return

"Legend, see your mummy wants to talk to you."

"No, she's not my mummy," he said.

His words hit me like a punch to the chest. I froze for a second, trying to process what I had just heard. I glanced at him, his little face blank, his voice firm. He wasn't confused. He wasn't joking. He meant it.

I looked over at her, waiting to see her reaction. She shifted uncomfortably, her eyes darting away as if she had expected this but still wasn't ready to hear it out loud.

It had been almost two years since she last saw him. Two years was a lifetime for a child his age. To him, she was a stranger, just another face, just another voice.

I swallowed hard, forcing a smile. "Come on, buddy, talk to her for a little bit, okay?"

He shook his head and turned away, his tiny fingers gripping my arm tightly. In that moment, I realized just how deep the damage ran. This wasn't going to be as simple as her showing up and picking up where she left off. This was going to be complicated. Messy. Painful.

And I had no idea how to fix it.

For the first couple of days, he didn't even want to hear her voice. Anytime he heard her voice through the phone, he would leave the room until the call ended. At first, I thought he didn't recognize her or assumed she was someone else, but after a while, I realized he knew exactly who she was.

I had shown him pictures of her over the years, keeping her image alive in his mind, and he still remembered her voice. That's why he always left the room—he wasn't confused. He was hurt. He was rejecting her before she had the chance to reject him again.

It made things very awkward because that left just the two of us. We had to talk to each other. We tried to catch up, tried to fill in the missing pieces of each other's lives. I told her everything she had missed—his first words, his favorite cartoons, the way he liked his food cut up into tiny little pieces. But no matter how much I spoke, it felt forced, unnatural. There was a heaviness in my chest every time we talked.

There was an anger inside me, one that had been silently brewing in my soul for years. And now, with her voice in my ear, that anger had nowhere left to hide.

I tried to be the bigger person, to hold it together as the man of this family. I wanted to fix things for my son, to make this work for *him*. But at the same time, I

wasn't too keen on it. The more we talked, the more I realized something—*all* my love for her had died. There was no warmth, no longing. Just bitterness, pain, and resentment that had settled deep into my heart.

She kept acting like she was doing us a favor by speaking to us, like she had the power to choose when and how she could be present in our lives. But she never addressed the real issue. She never explained why she had stayed away for so long, never tried to apologize for her absence.

Anytime the topic came up, it turned into an argument, or she would deflect, twist the conversation, find a way to avoid responsibility. She never once mentioned reuniting as a family. Never once asked, *What do we do next?*

I asked if she wanted to move to the UK, to start over, to be close to us. She immediately shut it down, claiming she wouldn't be allowed in because of her record as an ex-convict. Instead, she had another idea—she suggested we take Legend to Disney World Orlando for his birthday.

I kept asking, *And then what? What happens after the birthday?* After your son has finally reconnected with you, are you just going to abandon him again? Are you going to run off and disappear like you did before?

She had no answer. And in that silence, I already knew the truth.

But I didn't want to make it about me. I made it about our son, so I played along. I encouraged her to keep trying, even when it felt pointless. With time, Legend started warming up to her slowly. At first, it was just small moments—he would sit beside me while she spoke to him, never responding, just listening. I had to bribe him with sweet treats and McDonald's, promising him rewards if he spoke to her.

You could tell he wasn't talking to her because he missed her—he was doing it for what I had promised him. But I didn't care. I just needed to keep the door open, even if it meant pushing him through it.

I told her to be patient, to be consistent. It would take time for him to warm up to her again, to trust her. And trust wasn't something she could win back overnight.

But I could tell she wasn't too interested either. Her coming back into his life wasn't really a priority. It was clear she didn't truly miss him—not in the way a mother should. She probably just wanted to do right by him on paper, to make it

look like she was trying. She wanted to play the role of *mum* on her own terms. She wanted the title, but she didn't want the responsibility.

She wanted to be a wife and a mother, but she wasn't ready to pay the price. She wanted the love, the admiration, the title—but not the work, not the sacrifice, not the accountability. I knew I was a safe place for her, and deep down, that's what she really missed. It wasn't just about our son—it was about *us*.

I could tell she was tired of pretending with everyone else, tired of putting on a front for the world. When she spoke to me, she could let loose, be her true self without judgment. But what she didn't realize was that I wasn't that same guy anymore.

That version of me—the one who once loved her unconditionally, the one who would have moved mountains for her—was long gone.

Chapter 9: The Divorce

I stood firm in my beliefs and principles. Anytime she spoke about something I didn't like, I was quick to point it out. That free pass she once had? Expired.

Very quickly, I made it clear to her that I wasn't going to tolerate any rubbish this time around. This time, I was playing the game, and I held the whistle. In the past, she had always liked being in control of every situation, but now, I kept shutting her down.

She wasn't used to this version of me. The man who once tiptoed around her feelings, who bent over backward to make things work, no longer existed. I wasn't seeking validation from her anymore. I wasn't desperate to fix what was already broken.

For the first time, she was the one on shaky ground.

She tried every trick and tactic to maneuver her way around, but I was too fast for her this time. What she had failed to realize was that in the past, I had simply chosen to stay quiet. It wasn't that I hadn't seen the games she played back then—I had. I just hadn't had the strength to call them out. I had been too weak to speak up.

But now? Now, I was a different man. And she was finally realizing it.

I was quick to call her out or dismiss her, and I could tell it was provoking her soul. She tried her very best to stay calm, but I could see the frustration beneath the surface. I was intentionally pushing every button—to see if she had really changed, to see if she truly meant the words she was saying, to see if she was genuinely ready to be in her son's life. But every time, she gave herself away in the most minute ways. A flicker of irritation, a slip of the tongue, a subtle avoidance of the real issues.

She wanted control. She wanted the upper hand. But this time, I wasn't giving it to her.

I noticed she started using the word *narcissist* a lot, constantly pointing out that I was manipulative, that my behavior was sinister. But what she didn't understand was that I was simply playing her own game—and she didn't like it.

I was setting clear boundaries, and she couldn't stand it. The same tactics she once used to control situations were now being used against her, and for the first time, she was on the receiving end. She had never been held accountable before, never been told *no*. And now that she was, she didn't know how to handle it.

The icebreaker came one day when we were talking about religion. She kept forcing her new-age beliefs on me, but I never bought into it. She knew I was a very strong Christian, but in the past, she had introduced me to her new-age ways and completely made me turn my back on Jesus.

It's only now that I understand—she was trying to sway me from my Christian beliefs because she could tell that's where all my principles and mental strength came from. She didn't want me rooted in something greater than her influence. But this time, I wasn't bending. I wasn't the man she once had in the palm of her hand.

She used to send me endless TikTok videos about how Jesus never existed, how the church was just a tool for manipulation. She'd talk about how they had removed the books of Moses and Enoch from the Bible, how we were all gods in our own right, and how we didn't need Jesus to speak to the Almighty.

At first, I used to entertain the conversations, not because I believed any of it, but because I didn't want to argue. But now, I saw it for what it was—an attempt to strip me of my faith, because she knew that's where my strength came from. She wasn't just debating religion; she was trying to shake the foundation that made me who I was.

But this time, I stood firm.

In the heat of the moment one day, I made it clear—Jesus would be the foundation of my home. My wife must be a God-fearing Christian, and our kids would be raised according to the principles of the Bible.

And in that moment, she didn't expect what would come next.

She replied, "Well, good luck." And in that instant, I got the clarity I had been searching for all this while. It became clear—we were never going to be a family.

That was the moment everything crystallized, and I finally had the solid reason to do what I should have done long ago.

I asked for a divorce.

She didn't see that coming, but she tried to play it cool. She still wanted to stay in control, so she said she had wanted the divorce too but didn't know how to say it.

This coming from someone whose display picture was still clearly showing her wearing her wedding ring.

Then one day, she casually mentioned she was going to Nigeria for *Detty December*. I almost laughed in disbelief. Since coming out of jail, she hadn't seen her son, yet she had already traveled to Mexico and a couple of other places. And now—Nigeria?

I asked her not to go, to reconsider, to put her son first just this once. But she was already set in her ways. She *had* to go, she said. She was a bridesmaid at her friend's wedding, and she couldn't disappoint her.

We both knew that wasn't the real reason she was going back to Lagos. She didn't even attempt to lie properly. She didn't even suggest stopping to see her son on her way back, didn't consider staying to spend Christmas with him.

Instead of fixing her relationship with her child, her priority was *Detty December*. She had made up her mind, and nothing—not her son, not guilt, not even common sense—was going to come between her and that trip to Lagos.

In that moment, I knew.

She was who she had always been. And I was finally seeing it clearly.

I gave her a final ultimatum: *Don't go to Nigeria, we will start reading the Bible together, and remove any posts on social media that don't portray you as a mother or a wife*.

Immediately, she replied that she was going to Nigeria and that nothing was stopping her. She even insisted she'd get the marriage annulled when she got to Lagos.

Till today, I'm still waiting for my papers to sign.

Obviously, this dented our communication. I stopped talking to her as a husband and started speaking to her only as my son's mother. Soon after, she realized the shift.

Chapter 10: A New Beginning

The shift was complete. There was no more room for confusion, no blurred lines, no more false hope. I had finally let go.

For the first time in years, I felt like I was truly standing on my own two feet. No longer shackled by the past, no longer waiting for someone to change. It was just me and my son, and that was more than enough.

The silence that followed our last conversation was deafening, but it was also freeing. I no longer needed to check my phone, no longer anticipated her excuses, her half-hearted attempts at parenting. The emotional weight I had been carrying for years had been lifted.

But with that newfound freedom came a new challenge—rebuilding. Not just for myself, but for my son. I had spent so much time trying to fix what was broken that I had forgotten to fully build what was standing right in front of me. And that's exactly what I was going to do.

Anytime she asked to speak to my son, I would send her voice notes of him refusing to talk to her—so she wouldn't think I was ignoring her or failing to pass the message across. The truth was, he was tired of her inconsistency. Just when he would start warming up to her again, she would go MIA over the weekends. Then, by the time she resurfaced the following week, he had already forgotten her, and we were back at square one.

At this point, I couldn't even be bothered whether he wanted to speak to her or not. For the first time, I had finally seen her for what she was. At first, I thought it was just circumstance keeping her away from us, but then I realized it was intentional. She had planned this all along—she knew exactly what she was doing. She knew I was capable of raising him alone, and she was perfectly fine with it. There was no remorse, no guilt, no attempt to fix the damage she had done. In her mind, she had handed me full responsibility and walked away, free of burden, free of obligation.

That realization hit harder than anything else. It wasn't life keeping her away. It wasn't misfortune, bad timing, or circumstances beyond her control. It was a choice.

Then came her final words to me:

"Peju, I have realized you are SICK! I'm just waking up at 8am and here you are sending me a voice note as you usually do, showing me how much my child hates me and doesn't want to talk to me. As a father, does that seem normal? Of course, it doesn't, but I chose to create with a narcissist—what did I expect? Of course, you were designed to become a trigger and remain a trigger in my life. TODAY, I reclaim power from you and I release you!!!!

Unfortunately, Legend will suffer, but oh well, it's still you that will pay for your actions. I wish you both well."

Till tomorrow, I read this message every day. I still can't believe it.

It wasn't the insult that shook me. I had already been called worse. It wasn't even the fact that she had so easily labeled me a narcissist when, in reality, she had been the one manipulating every situation from the start. It was the way she so carelessly admitted that Legend would suffer, like he was just collateral damage in her quest for whatever freedom she was chasing.

That's when I knew. She wasn't fighting to be in his life. She wasn't heartbroken about their strained relationship. She wasn't devastated that her own son was rejecting her. No. She was only angry because she had lost control of me. I had stopped begging. Stopped chasing. Stopped trying to make things work. That's what stung her the most. Not the child, not the loss of family, but the loss of power over me.

My reply was simple: “Smh. At this point, there’s no need to explain anything anymore. Yes, I’m sick and a narcissist. I honestly can’t be bothered if you’re in his life or not. When he is old enough, he will come looking for you.”

I’m sure she never even saw it—she had already blocked my number before I could reply.

And just like that, it was done. The last thread had been cut. There was nothing left to hold on to.

But something about this gave me clarity. It dawned on me that I had been given a story to tell—one that many people didn’t even realize existed. Society had painted a picture that only men walked away from their children, that only men abandoned their families, that only men left women to carry the weight of single parenthood. But here I was, living proof that it wasn’t just men. Women did it too.

I knew then that I had to share my truth. Not for revenge, not for pity, but to break the silence. To give a voice to single fathers like me. To show the world that not every man who raises a child alone does so by choice, and that sometimes, it’s the mother who walks away.

This was bigger than me. And I was ready to tell it all.

Chapter 11: The Weight of Parenthood

Not everyone is meant to be a parent. That’s a truth I’ve come to accept. Society romanticizes the idea of having children, painting it as a natural step in life, an inevitable milestone. But the reality is, parenting is not for everyone, and bringing a child into the world without being truly prepared for the responsibility is one of the greatest injustices you can do to them.

Parenting is not just about providing food, shelter, or financial support. It’s about showing up. Every single day. Even when you’re exhausted. Even when you don’t feel like it. Even when you feel like you have nothing left to give. Because a child doesn’t pause their needs for your convenience. They don’t wait for you to be ready. They need you now, in the moment, and if you’re not there, the damage lingers far longer than you can imagine.

I've seen firsthand what happens when a parent chooses themselves over their child. I've watched my son navigate the confusion of rejection, the sadness of inconsistency, the quiet acceptance that the person who was supposed to love him unconditionally couldn't even pick up the phone. And no child deserves that.

I used to believe that any mother would naturally love her child, that the bond between them was unbreakable, sacred. But I learned that love is a choice, and some people simply don't choose their children. Some people choose themselves instead. And while that truth is painful, it has also given me a deeper appreciation for what it truly means to be a parent.

Being a father has forced me to grow in ways I never imagined. I've had to be his protector, his comforter, his entire world. I've had to make sacrifices that most people will never understand. But through it all, I've learned the true meaning of unconditional love. It's not about grand gestures. It's not about perfection. It's about showing up, every day, no matter what.

If there's one thing I want my son to know, it's that he was never a burden. He was never unwanted. He was never an afterthought. He was, and always will be, my greatest blessing. And no matter who chooses to walk away, he will always have me.

So if there's anyone out there who thinks parenting is just an obligation, just a title, just something you do because it's expected—think again. Children aren't accessories. They aren't checkboxes to be ticked off in life's timeline. They are human beings who deserve love, stability, and presence. And if you're not ready to give them that, then maybe parenting isn't for you.

And just as important as the decision to have children is the decision of *who* you have them with. The person you choose to co-parent with will shape your child's life just as much as you will. A partner who is unreliable, selfish, or emotionally unavailable will not magically transform into a responsible parent once a child arrives. If anything, those flaws will only become more pronounced.

Take your time. Observe their values, their integrity, how they handle adversity. Do they take responsibility for their actions? Do they show love consistently, not just when it's convenient? Do they put others before themselves when it matters? These qualities will determine whether they will truly show up as a parent or simply walk away when things get tough.

Being a parent isn’t about bringing a child into the world. It’s about never leaving them behind.

Chapter 12: Letter to Legend

My dear Legend,

By the time you read this, you will be old enough to understand the truth, to make sense of the choices that shaped our lives. I don’t know how you will feel when you reach these pages, but I want you to know one thing, above all else—

You are loved. You always have been, and you always will be.

I wrote this book because I never want you to feel lost in the unknown, wondering why things happened the way they did. I never want you to carry the weight of unanswered questions, questioning your worth or wondering if you were ever truly wanted. You were. From the moment I held you in my arms, you became my reason, my purpose, my greatest blessing.

Life has a way of shaping us through pain, through struggle, through lessons we never asked for but somehow needed. And while our journey has not been an easy one, I want you to grow up knowing that you were never abandoned—not by me. I fought for you every single day. I sacrificed for you without hesitation. And I would do it all over again in a heartbeat.

There will come a time when you will ask about your birth mother. I will never speak ill of her, because that is not my place. But what I will say is this—some people are not meant to be parents. Some people choose themselves instead of their children. And that is a choice they have to live with. But you, my son, should never mistake someone else’s absence as a reflection of your worth. You are enough. You have always been enough.

I hope this book serves as a guide for you—not just about our past, but about your future. Learn from my mistakes. Be intentional with the people you let into your life. Choose wisely who you build with, who you trust, and who you create life with. Love is not just about feelings, it is about actions, consistency, and responsibility. One day, when you become a father, you will understand the weight of what it truly means to show up for your child, no matter what.

I don’t know what kind of man you will become, but I pray you are kind. I pray you are strong. I pray you never allow this world to harden your heart. And I pray that, no matter where life takes you, you always know that you had a father who loved you with every fiber of his being.

This book is my truth, but it is also yours. When the time is right, this will be my gift to you.

With all my love, Dad.