

He Wants to Marry Me Again

"Madam, where you dey stop?" Ivuoma does not hear the question from the taxi driver. Her mind is still focused on the incident. She visualises the scene in a distorted form: a man with horns and wings, spiky wings that frighten her. She draws back from the imaginary man, receding to the corner of the taxi as the man seems to come after her. The man wears Uba's face and there is a girl clinging to his arms like a bride. The girl's face does not look like hers but it looks familiar. Yes Ivuoma is now coming out of the dream. She now remembers the owner of the face and frowns. It belongs to the girl who accused her. Fully alert, she adjusts her sitting position. The girl ... yes ... the girl and Uba, both Mrs Ivuoma Ezuma frowns in revulsion. She does not want to acknowledge what she saw when she entered the room. She shudders. Those girls might be using charms to influence the man, she reasons as she recalls the girl's accusation, "You are the one who made juju for my man, so that he will love only you and forget me! Your medicine don foul today!"

"To think that the man in question rightly belongs to me," Ivuoma now reasons, "and other girls are confidently enjoying him to the extent that one even had the audacity to regard him as her man. Since she accused me of using juju, it must mean that they use juju on him. Is it their juju that causes him to forget even me, his own wife?"

"Madam, I dey ask where you dey go?"

Mrs. Ezuma is still engrossed in her thoughts which are not directed towards the cause of her agony. She no longer admires the paved front yards of the rusty coloured houses as she did when she entered the city. She now notices the small shrines in the yards.

"Yes, is this not Benin, reputed to be the center of juju and magic? No wonder it has turned his head. The girls all visit the shrines and make medicine for the man. Why won't he become

confused and foolish?" Although Ivuoma is now blaming the shrines and the girls, she knows that her problems started ever before her husband, Ubanwa Ezuma, came to Benin. She tries to divert her thoughts towards a review of her relationship with Ubanwa since they got married, but the car stops abruptly, jerking her to reality. The driver opens the door and orders her out.

"Madam! Commot quick! I no know dis kin' woman wey no know where 'im dey go."

"I beg you. I am going to where I'll get a bus to Owerri."

"And we don pass Iyaro long time ago," shouts the driver adding "Now you go pay me extra five naira."

"I'll pay."

The driver slams the door, starts the car and makes a three-point turn on the right side of the dual-carriage way oblivious of the obstruction he is causing other road users. He quickly branches left into Iyahen, a side-street which curves back into Urubi, where he made the turn. The driver does not really need to have gone into the trouble of trying to confuse Ivuoma for although she is looking out through the window, she is not interested in the roads. The huge rubbish dumps catch her attention and nauseate her.

"Such a dirty city," she thinks, "is proper environment for dirty life. No wonder the city has corrupted my man." The taxi is flagged down by a nicely dressed lady who enters after bargaining with the driver. On seeing the lady, Ivuoma cringes in revulsion and recedes to the extreme left side of the seat so as not to let her body touch the lady's.

"Look at her," she says to herself in Igbo. "She is the type who uses her own legs to go in search of men, even other people's husbands."

"Madam, you know me before?" retorts the lady. Ivuoma does not know that she said her thoughts aloud, so she is surprised by what she considers to be an unwarranted outburst.

"Did I call you? What is wrong with you?" She says in English before adding in Igbo, "This town is bad-o."

"The town bad! Wetin you come find for di town? See am!" retorts the lady. Ivuoma keeps quiet. It is obvious that the Lady understands Igbo. There is an uneasy silence.

The taxi driver suddenly breaks into a song:

Poor man dey suffer,
Monkey dey work,
Baboon dey chop.

For the first time since she left the University of Benin, Ivuoma smiles. It is the taxi driver's jarring metallic voice like that of a frog that she finds funny. Even the frogs in the swamp near her home make better music than this arrogant taxi-driver. She cannot understand why somebody with such a voice should sing.

"A beg, stop your nonsense song!" commands the lady.

"Who be poor man sef? Who be monkey? A beg no disturb me with your croaky voice," she adds. The driver continues his song oblivious of the command. Ivuoma begins to think about the lady's questions. She feels that she can identify with the poor man of the song. It is at this point that the driver stops to let her out.

"Madam, bring your money-o! This na Iyaro. See bus dem wey dey go East."

Ivuoma is confronted by a variety of buses with different colours and names. Touts try to hustle her, each trying to make her enter a bus. She ignores them because she is looking out for a particular type of bus whose drivers are reputed to be careful. She soon finds the popular green and white striped "EKENE DILI CHI." She is about to enter when her eyes scan through the inscription on the bus. She stops and glares at it. Another passenger pushes her slightly as he struggles to enter the bus.

"Sorry Madam," he says. She steps back angrily. One would have thought that she was reacting to the passenger's push. She did not even notice him. She was questioning the inscription on the bus. She is repelled by the bus because she feels that the name, "EKENE DILI CHI" is inappropriate for her present mood.

"There is nothing to thank God for", she contradicts the inscription on the bus, and continues her search for another one. The sparkling white, green and orange colors of a bus whose horn is blaring catches her attention. She reads the name, "UHURU." It looks familiar but she cannot place the bus or the name. However, she enters and finds that it is almost full.

"Come in. Aba so-sei, so-sei," sings the conductor.

"I am going to Owerri."

"You no go find bus to Owerri," declares the conductor, before advising her.

"Take dis one, stop for Owerri. Na same price, no more, no less!" He looks away casually as if he is no longer interested in attracting Ivuoma to his bus and starts humming the music issuing from the bus' radio. Ivuoma feels that the sooner she leaves the city the better for her so she pays the conductor and proceeds into the belly of the bus.

While locating a seat, Ivuoma ruminates on the taxi-driver's song and tries to find her place in his satire. She no longer sees herself as the poor man but as the monkey who is suffering. Certainly, the girls are the baboons who are enjoying her husband and his money.

"I dey greet-o-o," salutes a middle-aged woman as Ivuoma passes by her to occupy an empty seat next to the window.

"Sorry Ma, good evening. It is the noise of this their music that won't let me hear you." As if in response to Ivuoma's complaint about the music, the driver's mate intones the lyric thereby adding to the noise:

Free world is saying,
Kill this apart-heid,
Africans are singing,
Freedom to your mind,
Yes!
Now, yes!

"I don't know the freedom they are singing about," Ivuoma complains again, sighing.

"Ah-a. That is a bad sound, my daughter," the middle-aged woman says in response to the sound just made by Ivuoma.

Ivuoma sighs again, "I am very sorry. I was thinking about my life. A woman's life is not easy," she says sitting down.

"Life no easy at all," the woman declares instantly before repeating herself for emphasis "No life is easy, my child."

"You won't understand," replies Ivuoma before becoming engrossed in her thoughts. Her mind wanders to her happy life as a student and she compares it with her present life.

"Just imagine how my education was halted prematurely because of marriage to a man who now treats me like a common dog who eats shit! After two children, he has deserted me." She

sighs again shifting in her seat uncomfortably, before continuing with her musing.

"Now I realise my mistake. If only I had listened to my father and finished my course, I would now have something to build upon. Now it is too late. How do I take care of two children all alone? I can't even improve myself by going back to school." Her eyes have become glazed with unshed tears.

"And now I am too old to go back to school and I cannot ..."

She is thrown against the woman as the bus makes a sharp bend. It is only now that she realises that the bus has left the Iyaro motor park.

"Sorry Ma." Ivuoma apologises to the woman.

"No worry, my pickin. It is not your fault."

Her accurate English sometimes mixed with pidgin makes Ivuoma suspect that the woman belongs to two worlds. Ivuoma's love for adventure and languages had excited her about coming to Benin but her experience in the city has wiped off her initial enthusiasm about mixing with and learning the languages of peoples from different ethnic groups found in the city.

"Madam, are you from Benin?"

The woman is surprised by this question coming from her moody companion.

"I am an Universal, my child. I lived in Benin for a very long time, but now I am Universal." Ivuoma wonders at the country called Universal. She cannot remember in which continent to locate it. The woman notices the confusion on Ivuoma's face and explains.

"I belong to wherever I find myself, my child. Although I was born in the eastern part of the River Niger, I consider myself a Bini because I have lived and worked in Benin for a very long time, after all our people say that "Where one lives is where she thatches." The woman suspects that the young woman does not fully understand the explanation. This does not surprise her because Africans tend to tie a person with the village where his or her forebears lived irrespective of the person's choice of place of residence and work. So she proceeds to give the younger woman a tit-bit that would broaden her perspective.

"I am from Benin today, tomorrow I may be from Sokoto or even the Moon. The nature of my work is such that I move from one city to another, from one State to the other, studying the

problems of the ordinary peoples, noting their commonality and knowing that human beings are the same irrespective of creed and origin. You can see that I am right in regarding myself as an Universal because I have been moving, working, and easily identifying with the peoples I work with although they are not from my great-grandfather's village. Maybe one day, this work will take me to other parts of Africa and the world. And I will find out that we are still the same."

"What work do you do, Ma?" Ivuoma asks with fresh reverence.

"I am involved in the Adult Education programme for rural dwellers and I am on my way to Ekwuoma to see to the establishment of the program there. Do you have a similar program in your area?"

"No," Ivuoma shakes her head, "I have only heard of 'Better Life for Rural Women'."

"The program is for all rural dwellers," the woman corrects Ivuoma, before asking, "How did you know about it, if you do not have it in your place?"

"I used to hear about it on the radio."

"Then you must see that it is introduced in your town."

Ivuoma is amused by this idea which appears far-fetched, but she does not show it. However, she now looks at the woman with a new respect. She has not seen many women of such stature before. The most influential women in her experience were the Principal and her deputy at the Teacher's College where she studied for two years prior to her marriage with Ubanwa Ezuma. Once again, she recollects how her plans to further her education were prematurely halted by marriage.

The woman notes that Ivuoma has reverted to her thoughts and interrupts her with an observation.

"You are unhappy, my child. You should not allow whatever it is to weigh you down."

"You do not understand. If you know my story, you will see that it is big enough to weigh down anybody." Ivuoma answers.

"What story?" The middle aged woman continues, encouraged by Ivuoma's apparent readiness to open up.

"The stories of life are not different from each other. The details may differ but the essentials are the same." She remarks in a casual manner that annoys Ivuoma. The woman then changes her tone, looks deeply at Ivuoma and asks, "You are not more

than twenty years old?"

Ivuoma nods in affirmation.

"What is it that a child of twenty has seen that will shake me. You are married, I guess?"

Ivuoma nods again.

"Then it is your husband?"

Ivuoma is silent.

"You do not wish to talk about it."

Ivuoma is still silent.

"Your husband does not give you money?"

"Worse than that," replies Ivuoma.

"He sees other women?"

"Worse than that."

"You caught him in bed with another woman?"

Ivuoma hesitates before answering. "Still, worse than that."

"Then, what is it?"

Ivuoma, again, is silent.

The woman takes pity on the girl who looks like a rat beaten to the ground, just as she had looked many times when she was the wife of Osaigbovo.

"My daughter, I shall not allow you to mourn, unnecessarily. I have a daughter like you and it will pain me if she dwells on her problem instead of trying to solve them. Everybody has a problem. I have had many. Whatever is your problem at your age cannot be more serious than what I suffered at your age as an illiterate wife of a soldier." The woman notices how glowingly this admonition has lit up Ivuoma's countenance, so she continues the story of her life.

"I was brought up in a remote village near the River Niger. I came back from the stream one morning. Do you know what? My father told me to pack my things and follow my aunt who had just given birth to a baby in Benin. That was how I started living with my aunt and her husband. My father enjoined me to obey her always and to take good care of my nephew. He said that he did not know when I would be allowed to return since the baby was still young but that he was certain the umbilical cord linking me with my mother and twin brother would remain strong and would not allow me to forget home. He said he would use my salary of ten shillings a month to send my brother to school. I saw myself then as a special person on whom the fortune and

future of our family depended. So, in spite of my attachment to my father and brother, I left home without much weeping."

"What of your mother?" asks Ivuoma.

"My mother had died a few months earlier while giving birth to a child that also died. In fact my father was still wearing mourning clothes at the time of my departure."

The woman notices Ivuoma's sympathetic face and asks, "Is your mother alive?"

Ivuoma sighs before replying, "She died long ago."

"So we are sisters in many ways," comments the older woman.

"I never really knew my mother," says Ivuoma with another sigh.

"Poor child. And your father?"

"He is still alive, the only father and mother I know, the only man I can depend on. Please, continue with your story. How did you marry?"

"Do not be in a hurry. We have a long way to go before Ekwuoma, so I shall tell you the whole story," replies the woman before continuing.

"My life in Aunt Mode's house was one of misery. I was beaten and constantly reminded that my father and brother depended on the money paid them by her husband who was a corporal in the army. I looked after the baby in the morning when my aunt was at work in the Hospital where she worked as a cleaner. In the afternoon when she came back, I hawked medicine and *kai-kai* in the neighbourhood. That was how I met Osaigbovo, my husband. It was easy for me to fall in love with the first person who showed concern for me in a hostile environment. I used to give him extra shots of the local gin because I was grateful for his attention and protection. He was strong, so no other recruit could touch me. When they finished training, he was posted to Uselu. I used to sneak out to visit him until the day my aunt's husband found out."

The woman claps her hand in excitement. Her face lit up in triumph. "Do you know what he did?" She whispers to Ivuoma. She draws near in a conspiratory manner.

"What?" Ivuoma asks in a whisper.

"My aunt's husband said to me, 'Well, since other men take you from my house, I must have my own cut. If you agree, fair enough. If you don't allow me, I'll report the matter.'"

"What did you do? I hope you did not"

"Wait." The woman interrupts her and continues. "I said to him, that's my aunt's husband, Uncle Mat."

"Ye-es." Ivuoma cuts in impatiently for she is eager to hear the substance of the story.

"I said to Uncle Mat, 'I am coming. Let me go and get ready.' He started getting himself ready, you understand?." At this point, the woman laughs.

"What happened?"

"I never returned to the room to find out what happened to him. As for me, I packed my things, jumped out through the window and made straight for Osai's house in Uselu. That was how I got married to Osaigbovo. He just welcomed me and before long, we were married traditionally and he started paying my brother's fees."

"Hei! This story is sweet-o," declares Ivuoma.

"Just wait, sister, that was only the beginning. My husband's mother did not like me. She looked at her son, looked at me and said 'Ebo, it is your yellow skin that you have used to kill my son.' Osaigbovo laughed but his mother did not smile. I felt cold, very cold and I used my palm to wipe off goose pimples from my skin. I knew she hated me. I told Osaigbovo that I was afraid but he said that it was nothing. That was the beginning of my trouble."

"My mother-in-law started weaving a basket for me. I was already heavy with my twins."

"You are a mother of twins?"

"Yes, a boy and girl."

"Just like me and my brother."

"I knew that there were links between us. They are showing gradually. I could easily have been your mother."

"But my brother died and I never knew him."

"Then you are really a survivor, Africa-never-die. 'Im no easy o-o. To survive the death of a twin and mother. You are spiritually strong, do you know that?"

"I think so." Ivuoma replies, "because I sometimes feel my mother's spirit around me especially when I am in distress. But, let us go on with this interesting story."

"It was a good thing that I was already heavy by the time Osai's mother knew of her son's involvement with a non-Bini. She

started making things difficult for me. First, she tied my womb. Before she could complete the process of knotting it, my twins were forced out at seven months. She might have completed the knotting after I had put to bed because I have never been pregnant since then."

"This is terrible. Tying her son's wife and blocking the coming of her own grand-children!"

"Never mind, she knew what she was doing. As for me, my umbilical cord ties my two children and the link is really strong!" She declares and then continues with the story.

"Although she blocked my womb, she continued weaving her basket relentlessly. I did not know all these at the time. I thought that with a boy and a girl and a man who loved me, I had established myself. I devoted my life to my family while my mother-in-law continued weaving her basket."

"It was when my husband started coming home late that I realised the extent of his mother's hatred for me. The way she gloated when I complained to her about my husband haunted me for a long time. I could not turn to my husband. I threw myself further into my family because my husband had refused to allow me trade or even...." The sudden blaring of the bus' horn interrupts her story. The passengers, all look out for the cause of the driver's agitation. He is overtaking a long line of cars in a corner and using his horn to dare any of the cars to challenge his right and might. The conductor is shouting:

"Get off, tadpole cars,
Onward Freedom!
That's my name!
Uhuru! Uhuru!
Movement to freedom!"

Though the passengers are uneasy about the speed, none dares complain for fear of the sting of the conductor's tongue or upsetting the driver who might become self-conscious or even reckless. Only Ivuoma ventures to talk.

"Driver please-o."

The conductor quickly admonishes her. "Shut your nonsense mouth, woman. This na Uhuru. Freedom by flight!" Ivuoma wanted to retort but the woman restrains her.

"You no go match his prowess in quarrelling. Na part of his

trade. Don't worry yourself. That is how they behave. Only the police can put a check to their irresponsibility but the police is not interested. That's why people tolerate them."

One thing Ivuoma has gained from the outburst is that she now knows why the bus appeared familiar. The name, "Uhuru," featured in one East African novel she had read years ago.

When the bus steadies, she turns to the woman, "E-he-e. Please, continue."

"Where was I?"

"How your mother-in-law rejoiced when you were unhappy. She is so unlike my own mother-in-law."

"Well, a few days after I reported my husband to his mother, he brought home a young girl, saying that his mother said that I needed somebody to help in the house and keep me company so that I would not be keeping a whole man prisoner. I was happy to have the girl, Odion. We got on well, but, I did not know then that by accepting her, I was putting my feet into the basket woven for me. You know how girls are when they start maturing. She started insulting me, beating my children, going out without permission and coming back when she liked. That was just similar to the way my husband was behaving. I beat up Odion and told Osai that his bad example was starting to take its toll, first on the girl and maybe later on my children. The beating my husband gave me that day, I have never forgotten. He said that he had never beaten me before and I had no right to beat Odion. Although I fought back courageously, throwing things at him and cuffing Odion who was on my way when I was running to my room, I felt humiliated. I felt like running away from the house but I had nowhere to run to. From that day, he started taking sides with Odion in quarrels between her and my children or me. He never saw anything wrong with her going too frequently to his mother's house. I discovered that I had lost my man completely when he accused me of wanting the girl to hate his mother as I did. "Woman, you are insatiable. You complain of loneliness, and my mother was kind enough to bring you a companion. Since then, you turn on the poor girl because she loves my mother. I don't know what you want," he shouted and stormed out of the house."

"What did you do?"

"I insisted that Odion should leave the house immediately or else apologise for causing trouble in the family. She apologised

and promised to be of good behaviour. It was a trick."

"How?"

"It did not take long before the whole plan opened before me like a book. Odion was pregnant. I questioned her. She packed her things and went to live with my mother-in-law."

"So, that was how I was inside water and soap entered my eyes. Who would I turn to? Not my husband or his mother. I had lost contact with Aunt Mode and her husband. I told my husband I wanted to go and see my father. He complained that he had no money for my transportation. A quarrel ensued because I was sure that he had enough money. He was just being spiteful. In the midst of the quarrel, he stormed out of the house leaving me to roost in my venom. That was when and how things became clear to me. I was nothing. I could not write to my brother who was then in a Secondary School in Warri, because I was illiterate. I could not visit my father because I had no money for transportation." At this point in the story, Ivuoma's mind diverts to her own predicament and she considers herself lucky to have a job.

"How lucky I am to have a job. Although I would have had a better job if I had finished my course before marriage, I still thank God for what I have," she thinks.

"My sister, are you listening?"

"Of course," Ivuoma replies.

"You will not believe what I did."

"What did you do?" asks Ivuoma.

"I forced open my husband's cupboard and took money from there."

"You were not afraid of what he would do when he found out?"

"I wanted to achieve my aim first and later worry about the consequences. What else would I have done?"

"There was no other option, Ma." Ivuoma replies.

"I told my children that they would not find me when they returned from school and left to see my father" The bus screeches to a halt.

"Jasper, an Inspector dey with dem-o! So, one naira no go belle full dem-o!" shouts the driver to his mate who is already asking the passengers to change a ten naira note for him to smaller notes.

"I know. Na im I dey find change so. I go give dem five naira,"

replies the conductor. A policeman enters the bus and the mate shakes his hand with a five naira note as the driver impatiently revs the engine and makes to release the clutch at the same time. The bus jerks and the policeman now smiling jumps out and salutes,

"Uhurul"

"Yeah, brother" replies the mate, "We are moving on. To freedom."

"So open?" wonders Ivuoma in astonishment.

"This is why corruption no go die for this country. Who will check who?" This is the woman's reply because she also saw how the money passed into the hands of the law enforcement agent. They remain silent for some time before Ivuoma asks, "Did you go back to your husband's house?"

"I came back that very day. He never knew of the trip."

"And the cupboard?"

"I had wanted it to be the cause of a quarrel and probably another fight but after my father's counsel, I changed tactics. When I came back, I got a carpenter to repair it."

"He did not miss his money?" Ivuoma asks.

"How could a man who loved women and the bottle have a proper account of his money? He did not find out. Let me go on with the better part of the incident. I met my father and brother who was home for a short break."

"What did they say?"

"My father had wanted me to return home with my children instead of risking my life in the house of a man who no longer cared for me. He believed that it would make Osai return to his senses. Then he would come to renegotiate the terms of the marriage. I convinced him that it would not work. Osai was not tradition-bound. He just used tradition as it suited him. He was city-bred and military in orientation. My father then said that I should come and start life afresh in the village. But how could I? I had become used to city life from an early age. I could no longer fit into the dull life in the village. Moreover, how would I pay my children's school fees without a job? And what of my brother whose education would be halted? My brother said that he could find a small job with the little education he had received. Then he would pay my children's school fees. But how could all of us depend on the small boy like that and even halt his

ambition? I refused to leave my husband. Then my brother came up with a brilliant idea which influenced our decision. With our father's village wisdom, I changed tactics. Instead of fighting and quarrelling, I started weaving my own basket."

"I became happy and determined. Do you know that I started learning how to read and write? My children were my teachers. By the time they entered Secondary school, I had reached their own level. By that time, my brother had finished and got a job. He wanted me to leave my husband and move to his house. I refused.

I knew that he would not be able to support all of us. I did not want to leave my children in Osaigbovo's house for his mother to kill. My brother started sending books and money to me and more books. I was reading on my own. My husband did not find out. He was busy sharing his time between my house and his mother's where Odion was living with her children. When the government started the Adult Education programme at all levels, I told my husband that I wanted to go to school. He was amused but he did not object. He said that I was so idle that I needed something to occupy me and that I could go to school and fool myself at my age. 'What will you do with education even if an old woman like you can get it?' I had developed a thick skin to his insults. I continued weaving my basket. After the interview, I was placed in Secondary class two. My husband never realised how far I had gone until I entered University of the Air."

"How did he find out? Through the children?"

"No, Odion was having problems with our mother-in-law and our husband moved her to my house. I did not resist. All I wanted was peace so that I could finish my studies. But, Odion wanted trouble. She engineered her children to make noise whenever I was reading and sometimes, she would stop the radio during a lecture and a quarrel would ensue. She told our husband that I was wasting electricity too much by having the radio on all the time. That was how he knew I had entered University of the Air. He slapped me and threatened to throw me out of the house if I ever touched the radio again. That was the second time my husband beat me. And on each occasion, it was because of Odion. I did not fight back, physically. I just kept quiet on the surface. My mind was on the basket I was weaving. I wrote to my brother who was then teaching in his former school in Warri. I informed him that Osaigbovo's house was no longer conducive

for my educational pursuit. At that point, I had nothing at stake in the house. My children were already in the University of Benin. I was prepared to leave.

About a month later, my daughter came home from the University. As soon as she saw Odion, she became livid with rage. 'You! You again! After what you did to us, you think you can still come here and cause ...' I held her, closed her mouth with my hands and took her to my room. I let her into the secret of the basket I was weaving: we should not dissipate our energy on physical combat but concentrate on improving ourselves so that we would not be helpless again. She agreed with me and told me that her uncle, my brother, sent her to come and tell me to meet a certain woman in Adolo College, Benin."

"Yam market, yam market, Umunedel! Some people dey go off here. Quick, quick!" The driver's mate interrupts the story and the woman realises that she is near her destination which is the next town after Umunedel.

"Well, my child who is also my sister, I shall be getting down soon, so I must cut my story short." The bus takes off with speed, and the woman starts gathering her things.

"Please, tell me what happened." Ivuoma begs for the story to continue.

As she puts her things together, she says, "Well, my story has ended. Leaving my husband was the beginning of my freedom. There is no time to tell you the details."

Ivuoma decides to take the woman's address.

"I finished my first University degree living with Mrs. Anucha, the woman my brother introduced me to in Adolo College. I was her housekeeper. Today I have two degrees, a good job and a proud personality." The bus stops and as she makes for the aisle, she adds, "Osaigbovo is now my friend. He comes to my house to complain about Odion and his third wife."

"What?"

"Yes. He married a third wife." she says as she disembarks.

From the ground, she tells Ivuoma through the window, "He wants me to forget the past and marry him again," she chuckles and emphasises, "He wants me to forget the two complications, but I remind him that I am too old to marry." Still chuckling, she adds, "Education has got the old woman a husband which she rejects." She is laughing as the bus moves on. The woman's

success story raises Ivuoma's hopes and aspirations but her own predicament and the fact that she failed to collect the woman's address and name combine to distress her. She starts reviewing the whole story in detail.