

SPECIAL MOMENTS WITH PAPA AND MAMA, MY PARENTS-IN-LAW

by
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I am the wife of Professor Charles Okafor. There are many stories, but since you want just one, let me talk about the one that happened early in my marriage with Charlie. My husband won an award to go to Harvard University in America. He was going to work with Professor Woodward who was a Nobel Laureate for chemistry. That was a big thing and they would allow him to come with his wife. The problem was that I had two babies to take care of, so I didn't want to go with Charlie. We traveled from Nsukka to Enugu in order to tell my parents-in-law about the good news. They were very happy, but they objected to his going to America without me.

"Anybody that is giving you an award must realize that you are no longer one as Charlie, my son. You are now two in one as Charlie and wife. You cannot go without your wife." That was what Papa said. I did not call him father-in-law because he was like a father to me. I called him Papa and referred to my mother-in-law as Mama.

Mama immediately volunteered to take care of my little ones, Okechukwu and Nnenna.

"If Papa Monica allows me to go," she said.

"Why won't I?" Papa said.

I know how hard it is for men to allow their wives to stay away for a long time, but Papa allowed Mama to



leave for three months. I also know how hard it is for women to leave the management of their homes and their husbands, but Mama left Papa and came to Nsukka to take care of my own house and family. That was a very generous gesture, to say the least.

What gladdens my heart so much is what she did in the last couple of visits. She would tell me to sit on her lap. Charlie would say, "Eh? You want to break Mama?" I would sit very close to her and place my legs on hers. She would hold me and shower blessings on me and my family. She would refer to me as a good daughter, wife, mother, and *odozi-aku cum okpata-aku*. She would call the names of my children and my grandchildren and bless them. Those were special moments.