



A BIRTHDAY SPECIAL

PERFECTLY INCOMPLETE

A SHORT STORY OF IMPERFECT LIVES
MADE PERFECT



BY OLABODE OLUWABUKOLA
RUTH

A short story of

Imperfect lives made perfect.

PERFECTLY INCOMPLETE

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Dedication

To the Immortal, invincible God only wise, my one and only, I dedicate this book. For the love with which He's loved me all these while and the promise that his love has come to stay.

Acknowledgement

All glory to God for making this possible. When He dropped the Idea of a book to celebrate my birthday, I had asked, “How would this be?” He had replied, “Trust me”

Khalil Gibran wrote and I quote;

“You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.”

To my dad who reads even while eating when He has to finish a book, subconsciously imbibing the reading culture in his children, and Mum who keeps account of even the minutest detail, teaching us the power of the pen and the paper I say thank you.

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To all friends and family members, including your names here would
make a whole book!

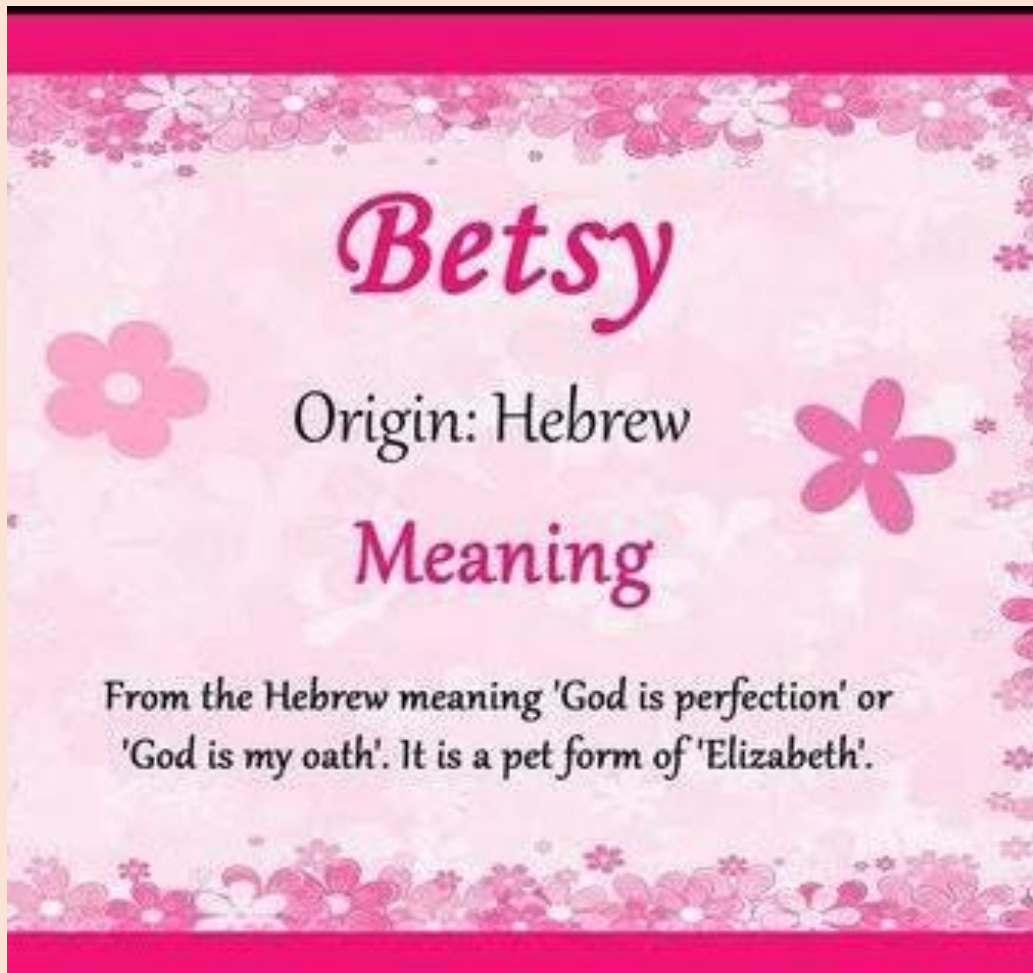
Happy birthday to me.

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CHAPTER ONE

Betsy



She was being held by the chin with the older one staring deep and long into her face, hoping that her eyes explained more what she was trying to say. The younger and fairer one looking around over her shoulder, a crisscross of lines showing on her forehead. She was clearly disinterested. The room in which both were in was already becoming tense with diverse emotions, the teacher in charge of visitors still wondering what it was that was being discussed for one long hour and so early in the morning.

“I love you Misty” The older one said with tears in her eyes, hands dropping from Misty’s chin. She was clearly exasperated. Her efforts had been thrown back in her face. Futile.

“Oh oh, you mean you think you do? I’ve heard this a hundred and one times from you but I don’t see it. I don’t even have the tiniest feeling that you love me” Misty said emphatically, face stone cold.

“What else do I need to do to make you see” Betsy’s voice broke.

She had vowed not to cry in Misty’s presence while thinking up words to convince her. One hour gone, nothing to show for it. Not less than forty five minutes’ speedy drive to her workplace, Adob Group of companies, Ondo State and here she was, fifteen minutes more with Misty and she would be fired. The two other visits she had paid to the school’s boarding house had earned her severe tongue lashing by the CEO.

For an accountant of two years at Adob, she had been efficient and duly recognized. Yet, as if followed by the spirit of strife, her colleagues were strongly against her. Child of the most high, she had been tagged according to the sticker at the back of her cream color Toyota Camry. So, the children of the ‘most low’ had ganged up against her, successfully pouring water on the seed of hatred that had been planted by the secretary. The secretary being the side chick to the married CEO, had almost implicated Betsy concerning the company’s financial account.

Here she was, the high and mighty daughter of the most high getting misty all over her daughter.

Misty Dawn as she had named her fifteen years ago had been her only source of Joy. Given birth to on a Sunday morning with Betsy laughing out loud with tears in her eyes on sighting the round faced baby clad in blue towel as she was handed over to her for her first suck. Tearful Joy could have been an appropriate name. But what beautiful child wants to be called ‘tearful’. Her run-away half-caste boyfriend with Obiara as surname would have loved such a name. Found to be pregnant at 15, hell had let loose at home.

She had broken the news to them at dinner.

“Could you repeat that?” Her father’s eyes had become bloodshot.

“Dad...” Betsy said weakly, her voice soft, tears already gathering in her eyes.

Rising up from the chair with great force, his plate of food got thrown to the ground, the china plate broke to pieces on the floor, spilling its content in the process. The maid had run in at the sound and bent to pick the broken pieces.

“Get out of here Bisi!” He had roughly pushed her outside of the dining room.

“What! You let one boy like that get you pregnant” her dad had thundered. Trying to calm down, he started pacing the floor.

Her mum had just sat still, head bent, deep in thought. Her 50% labor on her daughter had earned her a 6 month pregnancy. Hadn't she noticed something that was wrong about her daughter last month? She had forgotten everything about it just as soon as the thought came.

Probably Betsy would have just confided in her, the baby would have been removed without her father's knowledge. But now, her husband could bring down Rome for this cause.

“And you're just fifteen, oh my God.” What are we going to do?” Her mum had looked up to her father with pleading eyes. Whatever was going on in his mind must have been crazy. His nose was sweating already, great fury expressing itself in minor forms.

In her dad, an aspiring governor who didn't want a stain on his name was taking dominion over his thinking faculty, the father part was rapidly losing relevance.

“You're withdrawing from school immediately, you carry this baby to full term as it's already 6 months old. After that, we fly you to London to further your studies” He declared, his index finger pointing at the tummy that was a small fraction bigger than normal already. The lion of the house had spoken and it was final. Even her mum knew it.

“So what will happen to my baby?” Betsy had asked.

“Are you mad?” her dad was losing control totally. He was visibly shaking with anger now.

“How dare you say that my baby girl is mad? The deed is done already, the last thing we need now is having a mad person compound this issue. And if you ask me, you're the one raving mad!” Her mum stood up and screamed.

Bisi who had been roughly handled could only eavesdrop from the kitchen and nurse her wounds. This would not be the first she had been bruised. The madam of the house would do anything for her daughter even if it meant that she talks her (Bisi) down and cause emotional bruise. Bisi had noticed the tell-tale signs of pregnancy in Betsy but had feared that the whole blame would be put on her. Now, Mr. Lion had dug into her arm with his long claws.

“Mtcheew!” she hissed. “The man is definitely mad!” She thought.

Mr. Sodiya looked bewildered. His wife had never said that to him before. He looked around. Even if her mothering skills were faulty, she had never spoke back at him in anger.

“Ok, I’m sorry I said that, okay. But it doesn’t make sense that you just say these things because you’re angry. The girl is sorry you know and she merely asked a question concerning the baby.” Mrs Sodiya said, trying to ease the tension.

“Wow, I’m flabbergasted. Betsy you know what, you broke my heart, and you’re on the verge of breaking this home” Her dad said and left for the bed room hungry and angry.

That had been all that night. Betsy’s fate was fixed. But Betsy had fallen in love with the baby and she had run away with it leaving no trace of her whereabouts. Without being told, she knew that it was going to be given up for adoption if she did not act fast. Little did her parents know that she had set her bank account in order, sold her personal shares and had enough money to break off them.

That was when Betsy became an adult, with her beautiful baby turning heads everywhere. By divine will Misty had met Agnes, a Christian widow who had helped her take care of Misty as a baby inside the bus that she boarded to another state on sneaking out of the Hospital.

Betsy had cut off all contact with everyone. It was through Agnes that she came to know Christ, her mother’s basic church going had helped her catch on a bit though. Now fifteen years old, Misty who had been

thrown into a primary boarding school at the death of Agnes was already a big girl. Betsy had had to finish up secondary school and undergo a part-time university plan. The school had understood the issue and had taken care of Misty with that consciousness.

Presently, Misty's 16th birthday is coming up on the 29th of February, and it's just nine days to go. God had told Betsy that it was their year of reunion. But it was definitely not looking a bit like it.

“Misty, can you please hear me out. I never meant to leave you alone. I'm very sorry” Betsy tried again.

“You know what ma, you need to go right now because I need to go do some things before I go to class today.” Misty said, obviously impatient.

“Ok dear, I'd continue praying for you to hear me out and accept me as your mother. I did all I did because of...”

“c-c-c-an you leave now!” Misty said, stressing the “can” and pointing to Betsy the way to the car-park, a sigh escaping her lips.

“Ok, I will” Betsy managed to leave with her head at the normal angle, fighting so hard to keep the tears from flowing. Her fifteen minutes had already elapsed. Sure to be out of Misty’s sight, she ran as fast as her legs could carry her, unlocked her car, got into the driver’s seat and banged the door shut. With her arms wrapped round the steering wheel, she cried her heart out to God.

“Oh God! Why are you allowing these to happen to me?” she cried out loud with sniffs in-between.

With fists banging hard the steering wheel, she cried uncontrollably.

“I have served you since I got to know about you. Worse still, you told me everything is going to be fine. Maybe you shouldn’t have told me in the first place. Are you sure that all is going to be fine? I’m not believing you anymore. I’ve checked out the things you told me you have in plan for Misty and I yesterday, perhaps my faith would be strengthened again, but no! Only heartbreak upon heartbreak”. Fresh tears rushed out

again. Betsy checks her handbag for a handkerchief. She unfolded the pink handkerchief and blew her nose into it.

“Ok God, I’m sorry my faith is so small. I’m really sorry God.” She shook her head and tried to calm down.

“But I’m breaking Lord and everything is muddled up. I know that I left her all by herself to further my education, which was done to prevent the rest of my money from getting used up. Agnes was in full support until she died suddenly, perhaps it would have been better with her around. “But Lord...Loooord!” She broke down in tears again.

Few minutes later, she cleaned up her face, checked her appearance in the rear view mirror and applied fresh powder and lip-gloss all in a bid to prevent storytelling at the office. The last thing she needed now was pity. If it was not a plan that would help her get closer to Misty, any discussion about her daughter was useless. She revved up the engine of the vehicle. Whatever happens at the office, she at least needed to collect the sack letter first.

“God help me, I’m at my dead end. I bought her expensive stuffs, girl did not take them from me. And she’s just fifteen, can you imagine?”

“And why do you always act as though I’m not the one in charge of your life. Do you know it hurts me as well as you’re hurt by Misty?” the still small voice asked.

“Like seriously?” she asked, realization dawning on her.

“I feel very bad when you do that. I’ve told you and shown you several times how much you need to trust me. It’s as equal as the expensive gifts you bought for Misty which she rejected. I had told you that I’d help you, if you could have helped yourself I would have let you but last time I checked, you’ve been helping yourself out.”

“I’m sorry lord. Please have mercy on me” she said with remorse.

“Your mother got your contact already. She’s calling in the next five minutes. I’m not telling you this to get you to rehearse anything. When she calls, calm down, and let her vent all she wants on you. Answer her

calmly when necessary and apologize to her. Don't forget, I'm with you always.”

“Thank you Holy Spirit” she said and brought out her phone. Driving into a Petrol Station, she parked at a convenient space, awaiting her mother's call.

“Majesty, Majesty, your grace has found me just as I am” Her phone started ringing.

Taking a deep breath, she answered the call.

“Hello Betsy” The familiar voice said.

“Oh Mummy” she said, her heart leaping for joy, sputtering the very words she longed to hear from Misty.

“So you know you have a mother, latijo yii. It's so uncalled for o. you threw us into pandemonium when we found out that you've left with the baby. Your father even had a stroke as a result. Your father kept blaming me about your upbringing till he gave up the ghost.”

“Ah, daddy is dead!” She exclaimed.

“Did you care? Please don’t give me that.” She sounded very angry.

“In short, I got your number from my longtime friend, Mrs. Okafor. She owns the supermarket you patronized last weekend, Apex Supermarket. I hear that you patronize her a lot. She said that something clicked when she saw you on Saturday. So, I did my own findings on social media and here we are.” Her mother concluded.

“Mummy emabinu, I’m very sorry ma.” Her voice reflecting sobriety.

“Keep quiet madam, I’m still angry at you until you come and see me.

How is my grandchild? She must be very big already” she said, smiling from the other end of the phone.

“Mummy you are smiling?”

“Should I not smile, after praying to God for years to see you both?”

“Mummy, you now pray, I mean real prayer?”

“Yes o, I had to lose you and your father before I turned back fully to God. It is a long story but your father also gave his life to Jesus before he died”

“Wow mummy, I’m also born again! She screamed.

“Oh thank you Jesus! oro wa ti dayo. Ose o Jesu a o ma yin o. ah thank you Jesus!” she put the phone on loud speaker and started rolling on the floor.

“Hello mummy BB”

“Ah! Thank you Jesus, who is man that you are mindful of him? Who are we that you are mindful of us?” She was still saying while rolling on the floor.

“Mummy it’s okay. God is just too good” Betsy was smiling.

Now up, Betsy’s mum picked up the phone. “You know what my daughter, let us chat on whatsapp later. I have a meeting now. Take care of my granddaughter o.”

“No problem mummy. Later ma”

With a bold smile on her face, she turned the ignition and drove out of the filling station. Definitely late for work with 90 percent chance of being fired.

“Hmmm”. She deeply sighed. “A long term prayer had just been answered. Let the children of the ‘most low gang’ keep their job. It’s high time I started my own business anyway”. I’d submit my resignation letter tomorrow” She muttered to herself.

“But Misty...” she remembered and her face fell.

CHAPTER TWO

MISTY



Pop! The phone beeped.

*Many are the afflictions of the
righteous: but the Lord delivereth
him out of them all Psalms 34:
19(KJV)*

*Disciples often get into trouble;
still God is there every time
Psalms 34: 19 (MSG)*

Misty flipped open the phone case. It was Biology class and a whatsapp message came in. Big mummy had sent her usual daily encouragements.

Hmmn! The woman and her prophetic spirit.

“Thanks sweet big mum” she replied the message. One of the most valued things that Graceville College had brought into her life was her relationship with the older woman she referred to as big mummy.

Unlike Betsy, the one who called herself her mother, big mummy had enough time for her. Big mummy calmed her fears via calls and

messages. She didn't even have to be told some things before she knew. Big mummy could just put a call through very early in the morning warning her about some event that was to later happen in the day. She had even driven down the way from Oyo State to celebrate her last birthday with her. Her mum had only sent gifts even though she stayed at Ondo State with her, just a journey of less than an hour.

Big Mummy, Mrs Sodiya Esther had been invited to speak concerning Teenage life, Puberty and Sex by the school management counselling committee five years ago. Apart from the woman's beautiful petite frame and intellect as shown by the words she spoke, there was something else that attracted her and that, she couldn't place. The woman had delivered her lecture that day with so much emphasis on the God factor and led many people to Christ. Misty who was usually unmoved at anything spiritual had been caught unawares. The scenarios the woman painted was as though Misty had told her about herself. At the end of the lecture, Misty had run up to her at the car park and had spoken at length to her about her upbringing, her bitterness towards her mother who

came to see her once in three months, and didn't let her come home during holidays.

It was obvious that Mrs Sodiya had liked Misty the moment she set her eyes on her. Fair complexioned, smart and inquisitive, it was easy for anyone to like Misty. Mrs Sodiya had been confused about her name.

“Misty?” She had asked, confusion clearly written on her face

“What's the significance of your name?”

“Well, mum must have been very tearful at my birth that she cried so much on sighting me. Maybe seeing me around causes her to cry” Misty concluded, twisting her fingers.

“Don't make conclusions based on assumptions dear. It could be deadly.

Your mother must have a very good reason for naming you Misty. Think about it. You can call me as soon as you can but make sure that your house master knows about all these. My number is on the magazine that was shared today.”

“Alright ma” A big smile had encircled her face.

“Can I call you Uche?”

“What’s the meaning?” Misty had looked up at her

“It means ‘mine’” silence followed.

“Oh no don’t get me wrong Misty, I just don’t know why I’m gushing over you.”

Gushing over me? Misty had thought. Sounded like a good idea, at least someone was gushing over her.

“You’re Igbo?” Misty asked.

Mrs. Sodiya nodded. “Before I got married”

“Then I call you *Big Mummy*” she had replied excitedly.

“Take care Mysterious Uche” Mrs Sodiya said and winked at her.

“Bye ma”. The eleven year old misty had waved.

The relationship had progressed afterwards, Mrs Sodiya being the light which helped her tread the path towards life.

“Misty!” the biology teacher called suddenly, bringing her back from her reverie.

“What did I say about Gene drift?”

“Sir” Standing on her feet, she responded.

“I’m sincerely sorry for being in this class only in the body, my mind had drifted away” Misty said calmly.

The whole class burst into fitful laughter.

“So”, the teacher dropped the board marker and was advancing towards her. Pointing at her to draw the attention of other students, he continued.

“It was mind drift that was occurring in this part of my class while I was sweating away my time to get you all to understand the concept of Gene drift.”

“Hmmm, you can have your seat. But next time, I’d have you disciplined.

Is that okay?”

“Yes sir” Misty said and smiled. Who dared discipline her? Wasn’t she every teacher’s favorite?

There were murmurs coming from the far end of the class. Few minutes ago, Tunde, known for his laziness had just been asked to write a letter stating the reasons he had not submitted his assignment at the stipulated time with two copies of the handwritten assignment stapled to it. Now, ‘every teachers’ pet’ had failed to give an answer to a question because of her divided attention but had gone scot free.

“Teacher’s pet” The albino boy behind Misty whispered in her ears.

Eyes turning red with a pink blush on her fair face, she spoke in low tones.

“All the best for you”

“One house everyone.” The teacher called pretending not to notice anything.

“Ding ding dong” the bell signifying the end of the class went off.

Checking his wristwatch, he spoke.

“Now, you all turn to page 43 of your workbook, solve questions one to three and submit on my table before the general assembly tomorrow morning. Good day.” He said and walked out of the class with his notes in his arms.

Immediately the teacher left the class, Misty with her friend Dupe ran out of the class and up the stairs that led into the large and newly furnished Music room. It was a free period and as preplanned by the two friends, they were to spend it in the music room.

Taking her seat behind the piano with Misty opposite her, Dupe placed her hand on the keys, expecting a song from Misty.

Lonelllly!

I am so lonelllly!

I have noboddddy!

I'm on my owwwwwn!

Misty's rich alto voice rang out.

Dupe sat still and shook her head. "What are you singing? I thought we agreed that you won't sing this song anymore"

"I also thought you said that I should sing my reality, that way, my audience can get hooked to what I'm singing. After all, you're my only good friend in this school."

"And?" Dupe asked.

"I don't know who my dad is, Mrs. Betsy is a no-no, the one I call big Mummy might suddenly die or just hate me for the same reason Mrs. Betsy left me all these while. You could also do the same anytime." She said looking into Dupe's eyes. She continued "You witnessed what happened in the class few minutes ago. The reason I'm still every teacher's pet is because I top the whole class and who knows what tomorrow might bring?" Misty coolly replied, palms open wide.

"But is this your reality? I'm asking you Misty, answer me!" Dupe's tone rose.

As realization dawned on Misty, she spoke with anger. “Why do you all think I’m not a believer? Yet I’m a believer like you!”

“Calm down girl, I’m not arguing with you. All the things you said now are true to some extent but are these your realities? Are you not more than this? I’m not even sure you know who you are!”

“I know who I am, it’s just so hard to believe it.” Misty said and sat down, weary.

“Then you don’t know who you are, that’s the simple truth. You have a car but you’re trekking to the supermarket even though you’re tired, are you sure that you know that you have a car? You’re not conscious of it yet.”

Going to sit beside Misty, she put her arms around her.

“Look at me, what you say with your mouth matters a lot. And we are not ignorant of the devices of the devil... you confess when you sing songs and when you say stuff repeatedly with your mouth, you’re conscious of it and it becomes your reality”

“Then help me, I want to be conscious of my identity.” Misty said.

“Sure, what are friends for? Let’s sing this song together”

You are always there for me

You are always there to help me

Even when no one else was there

You were always there for me

Even when I can’t feel you

Even when I cannot trace you

I still have faith in your word

That you are always there for me.

They held hands and sang the song again, eyes closed. Misty was already in tears.

“I see light at the end of a tunnel Misty, the end is foggy though, it is obvious that God wants to unveil some things to you.”

“That’s true, I can attest to that.” She nodded

“And why am I hearing the number 29?”

“My birthday is on 29th, even you my friend, has forgotten”

“I’m very sorry Misty, I have been too carried away” she said and opened her eyes.

“Thank you Dupe” Misty said and hugged her tight.

Moments of silence passed. Misty then spoke up.

“God has been asking me to wait on him but I’ve been too scared to because I’m still bitter at Mrs. Betsy, I was wondering if he’d let me talk to him.”

“Maybe you should start by praying for her.” Dupe said and shrugged.

“It’s a suggestion though, you don’t have to do it if you don’t want but if you want to be able to talk to God freely, for that reason alone, pray for her”

“Naughty girl, what is the option in what you just told me?” She asked and smirked.

“Dupe released a hearty laughter. I didn’t want to impose it on you, after all, you’re a believer like me.”

Misty disengaged from the bear hug and hit her playfully on the shoulder. Getting up from the stool, she paced the floor and prayed.

“Now lord, I pray for Mrs. Betsy, she says she’s my mother but I have feelings of resentment towards her and I discourage her every time she comes to visit me. Lord, help me to love her. Please give her wisdom to say and do the right things every time. Whatever issues she’s facing, help her through it successfully in Jesus name.

Amen! How do you feel about her now? Dupe asked.

“It’s surprising but I feel free”

“You do it many more times and you’ll find out that you’re already loving her. It’s tested and trusted.” Dupe said and stuck out her thumb to lay emphasis.

“Hmnn, God, lest I forget, bless big mummy Esther too.”

“Amen” Dupe said softly and smiled a knowing smile.

CHAPTER THREE

MRS SODIYA ESTHER



Grrrrrrrrg! The phone rang. Mrs. Esther carried the pineapple juice she had just made from the kitchen into the sitting room. She was staying with her friend who stayed at Oyo State, Mrs. Okafor who owned Apex Supermarket. Mrs. Okafor had gone for a three-day conference and now, Mrs. Sodiya was home alone.

She dropped the glass of juice on the center table and picked up the phone.

“Hello BB, how are you?” She asked, a smile settling on her face. She then sank into one of the settees in the living room. Stretching her hands forwards, she carried the glass of juice with her right hand and sipped from it.

“Arrrrgh, arrrrgh mummmy, It is over oh!” came the voice from the other end.

“Ah! Oh God help me, what happened?” Mrs. Esther asked and hurriedly dropped the glass, wore the slippers at her feet and retied her wrapper. She then headed to her room.

“I’ve been implicated big time, I’ve been having this issue at my place of work as a result of envy. In short, I’ve just been arrested by the police, they are about to convey me to their station” Betsy speedily rattled off with panic in her voice.

“Any other word you say would be used against you in the court of law, now move!” a harsh voice spoke in the background.

“Give the phone to that boy, tell him I want to speak with him” Mrs. Esther’s voice had taken on an authoritative tone.

“Officer good afternoon” her voice was calm but firm.

“Good afternoon madam, how may I be of help?”

“Well, I only have few questions to ask you as someone in whose shoes your mother could be”

“Oh- okay, you can go on ma” The policeman stammered.

“Fine, now tell me, on a scale of one to ten, how feasible is this case? She asked”

“I’d rate it 9” he replied

“Ok, why did you agree that this phone be given to you?” she asked testing the waters.

“Well, life is unpredictable”

“Young man, I can see that you are a smart one, let’s talk business, and how much were you given for this?” Mrs. Sodiya asked quickly, hope displayed on her face while she chewed down on her lower lip.

Betsy on the other hand was confused. Different thoughts were running through her mind.

“Is my mother not a Christian? Why is she trying to bribe this policeman? Old habits die hard though. Anyways, I’d ask her that by the time these men let me off.” She thought.

The other policeman who had gone into the house to search for incriminating materials walked in. On sighting the other policeman, the one who had been on a call had quickly removed the phone from his ear and tossed it to Betsy who was seated but was already handcuffed.

Tell your mother goodbye! He barked at her.

Mtcheew! She wanted to scream “pretender” at him.

“Oh God!” Betsy sighed instead. She was about to be imprisoned.

Hmmm! Mrs Sodiya sighed. She was going to continue her investigation at a later time. That greedy policeman would do, she would ensure that. This was another opportunity to engage her sonship. Hadn't she been in worse situations?

“Ha Ha Ha” she laughed. “You devil, you are a liar!” She said.

Her scars had been sealed with the oil of gladness. She had risen from her mess strong and wise. She had not been a 100% mother to Betsy in the past. Now was the time to act like the lion she is. She stood up and sauntered about the room.

Picking up her phone, it was Uche’s message that popped up at her.

Hi Big Mum, Pray for me, I’m bitter against someone. As I’m typing this, I’m in tears because my heart is desperately wicked. I can’t even eat anything.

Clapping both hands together, she spoke to an imaginary entity.

“So, you’ve even attacked Uche with guilt. Oh, now I get this, this is actually against me. My lost but recently found daughter is now a prisoner and my baby girl is about to fall into depression”

“Ho Ho Ho”, she laughed hard.

“Well, good strategy. Do your thing, and I’d do mine, but not your own way.”

Quickly, she had to sharpen her weapons.

Some souls that are dear to me are under the attack of the devil, please pray with us.

That was what she sent to her Praying Women’s group on Whatsapp.

Rummaging through her purse, she brought out Betsy’s picture while she was fifteen. Opening her phone gallery, she also checked for Uche’s picture. Placing both side by side, she began to worship God, pacing about the room. After few minutes, she began to pray in tongues over both ladies, using their pictures as point of contact.

Waking up the next morning, Mrs. Esther found herself at the foot of the bed. She had slept off while praying. She had ended up interceding for both of them for four hours, when she got tired, she knelt at the foot of the bed to continue, and sleep took over.

“Awwwww” she yawned. Getting up from the foot of the king size bed, she sat on it instead. The old picture and her phone were still on the bed.

5 missed calls greeted her. It was Mr. Charles, Uche’s class teacher. He had called at 2am. Panicking, she placed a call to him.

“Hello sir, what happened?” She was losing herself already.

“Hello ma this is Mr. Charles from Graceville Coll...”

“I know it’s you sir, are you going to tell me what happened or not?” Her voice was uncontrollably loud and showed impatience.

“Ok ma, Misty tried to commit suicide yesterday around 1:30am, her roommates said that she had almost used a new blade to cut her wrist. Thanks to God because if not for Dupe, her roommate who had woken up to ease herself around that time, the deed would have been done.”

“Ah!” was all Mrs. Sodiya could say.

Now back to why we called you, we had tried to ask her why she wanted to kill herself, she wouldn’t speak a word to anyone. We had placed many unanswered calls to her mother, then Dupe had suggested calling you too, perhaps Misty would say something.”

“Oh God! So where is she now?”

“Well, she had to sleep in the sick bay so that the nurses could keep an eye on her. And I saw her few minutes ago, she was looking like she had no care for anything in the world. Could you call me an hour later please, I should be on my way to see her then.” He said with a note of finality.

“No problem sir” Mrs. Sodiya said and dropped the phone.

How could it be! She screamed.

“At this same age, I had lost Betsy, now the one that God has graciously given me is trying to leave me also. Am I that bad as a mother?” she wailed, rolling on the bed. Standing up suddenly, she wiped her tears with the back of her hand, picked up the old picture and compared it with Uche’s.

Eewo! She said, putting both hands on her head.

“Why do they have the same nose shape, except that Uche’s own is longer? And see those milky eyes. They could have easily passed off as sisters if they were age mates.” She thought.

“No, no Esther focus! When Betsy is out of prison, you’d see your grandchild.” She told herself.

Rousing herself, she prayed:

“Oh lord, I hope that I’m not walking ahead of you? Lead me in the right path and me be surrendered to you. Concerning Betsy, Misty and my grandchild, lord please take over. Amen.”

She had to go see Betsy at the prison.

“Someone is here to see you”

A warder walked up to the iron mesh door that secured the room in which Betsy and other inmates were confined.

“Me?” A rough looking fat woman who looked like she was sixty years old ran to the front.

As Betsy saw her mum, she broke into tears.

“Abeg commot for road, no be you big madam dey find.” Another inmate walked to the door.

Pointing to Betsy who was walking slowly towards the door. “Madam, na you give birth to this chicken, na hin make her dey shake one kin anytime we think say we should try yarn her latest tori make she con know wetin dey happen for we own side. Na so she dey do at home?” she asked Mrs. Sodiya.

Mrs. Sodiya tried to take in what she was seeing. The grey walls were begging for paint. The room looked as gloomy as death itself. No sane human would want to live there for a week. Her flowing Kaftan was sleeping the old cement floor as she leaned closer to have a better view.

“Ehn, I didn’t hear you, can you reiterate? Mrs. Esther asked.

“Asake! The woman did not hear you, go straight to the point, tell her what we want biko, hunger dey wire us for hia.” That was another shout from a lean inmate.

“Oh, you mean this?” Mrs Esther smiled and raised a basket that had been lying at her feet.

“This is hot Amala, Ewedu soup and beef for all of you” she announced.

“Mama the mama” a loud cheer erupted from the twenty two inmates.

Betsy looked bewildered. The warder standing beside her mum was smiling. She must have settled them as well. The warder opened the door carefully and pushed the basket in with care. Betsy went out of the room, glad to stretch her legs.

“Omo mi, don’t worry, God will see us through” Mrs. Esther said and Betsy nodded. The warder led them to an open room and pointed a chair and table to them.

“Madam, twenty five minutes” the warder said and Mrs. Esther nodded.

“My daughter, I had hoped to get that police man I spoke to on phone yesterday to spill the beans right there. I think I know a bit of what is going on.” Positioning her mouth near Betsy’s head, she whispered some things.

“Ookay, but we still need a lawyer” Betsy said.

‘Yes, I’m going to contact one as soon as I leave here. I don’t want you to spend up to a month in this hell’. She said, laying emphasis on the ‘hell’.

“Mummy BB, but I’m scared for my daughter, we haven’t been on speaking terms for a while now and I don’t know how to contact her. I have not been a very good mother to her, in fact she hates me” Betsy confessed, fresh tears spilling out like Niagara Falls down her face.

“Pele dear, as soon as we get out of this one, we will deal with that. Many people are praying for you, wipe your face” Mrs. Esther said, giving her a handkerchief she had brought out of her designer Alberto handbag.

“You know, there’s this little girl I got attached to at a school that I was invited to as the guest speaker. She’s brilliant and beautiful, she also has issues with her mum, the school authorities called to inform me that she attempted suicide yesterday”. Mrs. Esther spoke, trying to keep the conversation going.

Betsy shook inwardly, she prayed silently that Misty’s case not worsen up.

“What’s the name of the school?” she managed to ask.

“It’s Graceville College o, oops! Let me call her teacher now. I had promised to give them a call before I drove down here. It’s not as if I don’t call her personally though” Mrs. Esther giggled at her mischief while dialing the number.

“What is her name?”

“I call her Uche, she is a yellow pawpaw”

Betsy heaved a sigh of relief. She had been tensed all over. “I call her Uche, yellow pawpaw” Betsy ruminated. In order that she doesn’t rouse her mother’s suspicion, she stemmed the flow of questions.

“Hello sir, this is Mrs. Sodiya speaking.”

The phone was not put on loudspeaker, so, Betsy had all the time to ruminate on all that she had heard.

“Betsy!” she was called back into the present. “Don’t think too much about this, Uche wants to speak with you” she said, thrusting the phone at her.

“Hello dear Uche” Betsy said, trying to put some liveliness in her voice.

“Hello ma, I heard that you are in prison.”

“Yes dear, I’m sorry that you had to meet me in this situation.”

“Oh no don’t be sorry. I’m also in a prison now. I have carefully built a wall of unforgiveness against my mother. Hmmn, I refused to forgive her, I had locked her up in my heart all these years, now I’m uncomfortable because the space is not enough for both of us”

“Oh dear, may God help us to break free from our prisons”

“Amen, I just want you to know that alongside prayers for my mum, I have included you”

“You’re such a darling, thank you. I can’t wait to see you though” Betsy smiled.

“Same here, but why does your voice sound familiar”

“I wanted to ask the same question too, I can’t remember meeting any Uche”

She giggles. “Oh, that’s not my real name, that’s just what *big mummy* calls me. Well, my birthday is on 29th, that’s five days from now. I hope that you’d have been freed then.

“Hmnm, I hope so. The issue on ground is concerning twenty million naira oh. Wait, you said 29th?”

“Yes, we’re in a leap year”

“You attend Graceville?”

“Yes ma”

“And what is your name, I- I – I mean your real name?” she stammered.

“Misty ma, why ask?”

“Oh no!” Betsy said and the phone clattered to the floor. She sat down on the floor in tears.

The warder ran in. “Madam, come and be going, can’t you do your talking without noise?”

What's wrong with you my dear? The concerned mother bent down to ask.

“Your Uche is my daughter!” she cried, her face contorted in pain.

“Madam, you can leave now” a male voice boomed behind her.

The warder carried Mrs. Sodiya's handbag, gesticulating that she follow him out.

“Mummy!” Betsy cried.

Betsy! I love you still” Mrs. Esther said with tears in her voice, stepping out of the room.

“Mama! Come back tomorrow with Amala!” one inmate cried.

Epilogue

*The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy oh Lord,
endureth forever: forsake not the works of thy own hands.*

Psalm 138:8

“BB, pass me the chocolate cake” Big mummy said.

“Isn’t the pancake enough for you granny, remember that you’re
growing old” Misty said.

Betsy threw breadcrumbs at Misty. “It’s my own mum you regard in that
manner, you ought to get beaten.”

“Well, what do you say about someone who had promised not to eat
sugary things anymore, pasting a written word in that effect at a corner
of her room” Misty asked, popping some chinchin in her mouth.

Adjusting the glass on her face, Big Mummy spoke. “Look who’s
speaking, why did you include it in the menu knowing fully well that it is
my favorite?”

“I thought that a little temptation shouldn’t sway you” Misty replied mischievously.

“Foodie, she’d do anything to have my special chocolate cakes to herself, now momma has beat your hands down” Betsy commented.

“But I’m the birthday girl, this is so unfair” Misty said, pretending to cry.

The other women burst into laughter.

The little picnic was being held at big mummy’s garden, soft music was playing from a Bluetooth speaker that was put at the far end of the cloth spread. Just like a dream, it was already Misty’s twentieth birthday. Now comfortable in their skins, they could hang around each other.

The criminal case involving funds had stretched both grandma and granddaughter who fought many wars concerning Betsy on their knees.

Just like yesterday, Mrs. Sodiya had driven to her friend’s house from the prison, wondering how everything had fallen into place. Her Uche had been Betsy’s Misty, Misty had been her granddaughter. She had driven on high speed to the hotel where she was lodged.

On checking the two pictures she had prayed on the previous day, her eyes were finally opened, God had been dropping hints all the while. She had given thanks to God like never before.

“Do you know that the lady who set me up at my place of work was released from prison last week, she sent me a letter of apology via mail stating facts why she couldn’t help but envy me and commit a crime in my name, you should have seen the surprise on my face, I was like ah-ah-ah for a minute. You mean that you envied my confused life? I couldn’t help but pity her”

“Well, let’s forget about that for now, we should just keep thanking God for making that greedy policeman loose with his words”

“Definitely” Mrs. Sodiya chipped in.

“And that unmarried lawyer too”. Misty added.

A blush crept up Betsy’s face. Noticing it, Misty cleared her throat.

“Seems like my Mum’s high and mighty heart has been captured by that tall and dark lawyer”

“What are you talking about?” Betsy asked, feigning ignorance.

“Hmmm, don’t tell me that my daughter is not aware that blood rushes up her face whenever a particular person’s name is mentioned”. Mrs. Sodiya nodded sideways.

“Why are you both like this? I can’t stay here anymore”. She then stood up and ran into the house.

“Mummy, just tell us when the wedding is, I can’t wait to have a dad!” Misty called after her.

“And we’d have a man at Uche’s next birthday”. Mrs. Esther also shouted after her.

It was funny that Mrs. Sodiya had to lose her husband before she could face God squarely, it was funny that Betsy had to lose confidence in

herself before Misty could be reached with love. Misty on the other hand had to lose bitterness to experience joy.

They still could have remained imperfect people but letting go the reins of their lives, they handed it over to God, surrendering their all, God fixing the void in their lives. They remained perfect, just as the lord is because He was with them.

With him with them, they remained THREE LADIES, PERFECTLY INCOMPLETE, BECAUSE THEY WERE COMPLETE IN GOD.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Perfectly incomplete could have been anybody's story, portions of it could be what some actual persons are going through presently. A weave work of situations, circumstances, events and dates, its spiritual significance should not be overlooked.

In this part of Nigeria, I don't know about others, the month of February is seen as an incomplete month. Did you just say "Wh-aat!?" Whether with 28th or 29th, February is the only month in the year that's without extra days. Probably because of Job's birthday that was deleted. Oh, I can't stop laughing.

Now, not to get confused, this is not the purpose of this book. But I wouldn't overlook the fact that some things that we call incomplete should be seen from a different perspective, they should be seen as **UNIQUE**. That guy without legs, that girl with four fingers on her right hand, six on the other, the six-year old boy on wheelchair, that stammerer etc. Apart from the likes of the above listed, there are

particular attributes in each person which might not necessarily be appealing to others. If harnessed and utilized well, they could be the bearer's point of uniqueness. These people and attributes if nurtured would make the world extraordinary by their uniqueness if allowed.

If it were not true, the following bible verses;

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isa 55: 8 & 9

But as it is written, eyes hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him 1 cor 2: 9.

Should be regarded as fallacies.

MEET THE AUTHOR



Olabode Oluwabukola Ruth is currently a 200 level Botany student at the prestigious university of Ibadan, Oyo State.

A lover of God and humanity, she seeks to reach the world through her writings and songs. She loves teenagers and is particular about children.

Brought up in a Christian home, she is the first of five children, she being the first daughter of four girls.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Perfectly incomplete is a book that shows how incomplete a life could be without God. It shows that when God is allowed to lead over the affairs of men, the incomplete becomes perfect. Betsy made a costly mistake that separated her from her family and friends in her teens. Accepting God's love through widowed Agnes was the only option now that she had no one on her side. Following the death of Agnes, Misty, Betsy's beautiful daughter had to be put in a boarding school till Betsy completes her abandoned education.

It is going to be Misty's one-in-four years birthday soon. Misty is still embittered against her mother but God has assured Betsy of a reunion. Her place of work has turned into a living hell. Would Betsy survive the pressure all around? Find out in this intriguing book.

