

I am not easily swept off my feet, but this story is different;
intriguing, compelling and full of lessons. I am impressed
OLU 'FUNTO, New York

Whisperers



P . P O S I T I V E

WHISPERERS

This book
is a **gift** to

You

from

The Author

on the occasion of

A Brand New Discovery

date

18th April, 2012

W H I S P E R E R S

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to
EVERYONE
who has experienced domestic violence
or is currently experiencing it.
May you find the courage to
BREAK FREE.



appreciation

My sincere appreciation goes to

Olu 'Funto and Kemi Catalyst Otuyemi

YOUR CAREFUL EYES HELPED ENSURE THIS WORK IS ERROR FREE.

Amaka Nwaobi

YOU ENCOURAGED ME TO DEFINE MY WRITING STYLE.

NYSC Ebonyi state

YOU GAVE ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE

AND BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION.

God Almighty

YOU MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO CONVERT

MY THOUGHTS INTO THIS BOOK.

— | THE STORY BEGINS | —

Most children go to God with series of prayer requests, asking for toys, clothes and many other things. But, for many years, I had just one prayer request,

'God deliver me from my father'

My mother was my angel but she had one fundamental flaw -She was long suffering, too long suffering and very forgiving.

For as long as I could remember, my father would pick up fights with my mother. He would throw punches and slaps, leaving her with scars and bruises. From an early childhood, I had learnt the meaning of tyranny, I had to, I lived with a tyrant.



My younger sister and I would cry beside our mother, with tears in her eyes she would try to comfort us, and then gently whisper,

'Your father will change one day'

My father was indeed a wolf in sheep's clothing, there is a saying that if you live with wolves you would learn to howl. That saying may be true for many people but not for my mother. Years went by but she didn't learn to howl, she didn't learn to fight back, she just whispered, she just prayed.

'Chineke biko zam ekpele, God please answer my prayers'

Perhaps she was too scared; maybe, just maybe it was because of us - her children. She repeatedly whispered to us,

'I must remain in this marriage because of you my children'

Sometimes, I could hear in her voice that she wanted to give up. She had become like an eagle confined to a small cage but presented with the view of the mountain side.

I watched in disdain as my father would treat my mother like dirt and worse still, he looked like he couldn't hurt a fly.

I hated when people described my father as ; A gentle man, a handsome man, a good father, a God fearing person and the likes.

Sometimes, I felt like telling them who my father truly was; a snake, a wife beater, a drunk and a con artist. But they wouldn't believe me; after all I was just a child.

On one occasion, my mother got to the church with bruises on her face. The pastor was concerned and enquired to know the cause. She initially tried to cover up but the pastor insisted until she told him that she had been beaten by my father and, it wasn't his first time.

Pastor was angry and sad, more angry than sad. He called a few of the church elders and they too were very disappointed with my father. They immediately sent for my father and he came dressed in false-remorse and pseudo-righteousness.

'Brother Titus, this behaviour is not expected of a born again christian'

Pastor began.

The pastor and the elders didn't mince words of their disappointment; my father wasn't defensive at all.

'I admit I was wrong to have beaten my wife' he began.

Then he promised that it would not happen again. He didn't try to defend his actions, he just admitted and apologised but he then added,

'Na devil work no bi ordinary eye'.

His performance that day was very convincing; it could fetch him an award at the oscars. I stood outside, close to the office, and I heard everything. I was also fooled to think he had changed. But, my mother knew better, 'the church people' had just added more fuel to a wild fire.

That evening, my father removed his belt and beat my mother blue and black. He dropped the belt and pounded her to a pulp, he was careful not to place a bruise on her face.

He then threatened her,

'If you ever report me to anybody again, I will kill you and your useless girls'

My mother was too scared to even cry, I peeped through the key hole to look at what had become of my mother. I hated the 'wife beater' even more.

That night, my mother cried in whispers, I saw her tears and I cried too.
Many questions ran through my head,
'Was my father a woman beater before he married my mother ?'
'Did she know about his habits ?'
'Why did she marry him ?'
'Why is he my father ?'

Many questions, but I couldn't find the right answers. I just sat beside my mother and cried.
She held my hand, wiped her tears, wiped my tears, and then whispered,
'Everything will be alright'

I believed her, I had to, she was my mother and I loved her.

Two weeks later, my mother died.

My father told everybody that she died after a brief illness but I knew better. She died from the inhuman treatment she received from my father, and, it



wasn't a brief period. She had been suffering for as long as I could remember.

Months went by and my mother was becoming a memory, but, her whispers sounded louder in my ears. She spent so many years whispering I always wondered why she didn't speak up, fight back or just walk away.

One night, my father came into the house with a 'strange woman'. That night, I heard sounds, the kind of sounds my father and mother used to make when they were not fighting with each other.

Giggles, laughs and then the squeaking of the bed. There were a couple of soft groans now and then, this was followed by silence, and the 'bedminton' was over.

That was how he started, every other night; he came home with a different woman. He drank more and he smelt of confusion and folly.

I hated him, I hated him so much, but, I was just a little girl so I had to whisper. I held my younger sister close and whispered the same words my mother whispered to me,
'Everything will be alright'

I spoke the words, but I didn't believe it. I hated my father and I didn't believe that anything good would come from him being my father.

One day, he came into the house drunk and surprisingly, he didn't come home with a 'hand bag'. That night, he touched me.

It wasn't the usual father-daughter kind of touch, it was soft and tender but it was wrong. Although I was quite young, I knew enough to know that he was 'smooching' me. I couldn't shout, I just whispered, 'Daddy, what are you doing?'

'Nothing'

He replied.

That night, he stopped before he went too far, I was scared, confused but didn't have anybody to tell.

My father didn't stop; he continued to come closer to me. Initially, it was nice to receive some attention from my father but soon he started to touch me in 'places', I began to get scared, I hated him.

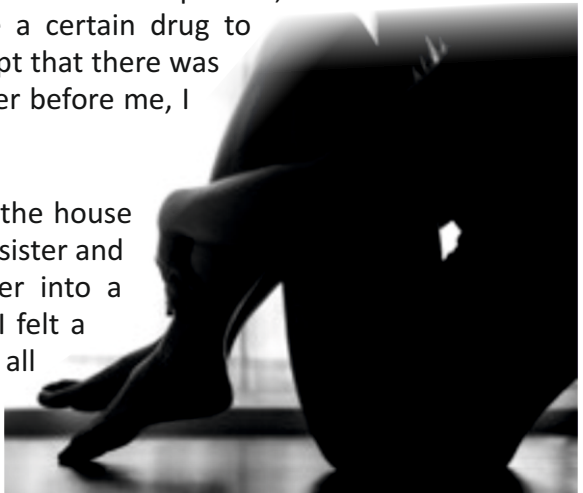
I cried for help but nobody came to rescue me. He took off my cloth and, in a wicked manner, he raped me. I cried and cried but there was nobody to

give me a shoulder to lean on. It was as though he was possessed by an evil spirit. The sound system was blasting louder than my cry for help.

Then, he threatened me,
'If you tell anybody about what happened, I will kill you and your sister, is that clear?'

I was beginning to understand what had just happened. I had been introduced to the kind of hell that my mother found herself, the kind of hell where you shout in whispers. I was too scared to ask for help or speak to anybody about what was going on in my father's house. It continued unabated, every other night he would rape me, threaten me and then give me a certain drug to swallow. I was beginning to accept that there was no use crying, just like my mother before me, I had learnt to just whisper.

One night, my father came into the house drunk as usual. He took my little sister and decided it was time to turn her into a woman. I went mad with rage, I felt a sudden urge to protect her at all cost. I was ready to let out hell then, he shut the door locking in



my younger sister who kept calling for help,
'Sister T! Help me!'

I felt a need to rush in and save her from the devil that fathered me. But then, I remembered his threat and what became of our mother. My mother couldn't report to our relatives because they wouldn't believe her and my father would deal with her mercilessly, so, I didn't think I had a place to turn to.

When my sister eventually came out of the 'torture chamber', everything had changed; my sister wasn't crying, she was too scared to cry. That night I knew something terrible had happened to her, I couldn't figure it out but I was tired of whispering.

The television was on and I was fortunate to watch 'Moments with Mo'. The guest on the show was talking about domestic violence and he focused on child molestation, rape and abusive relationships.

He spoke with so much calm and charisma and it was difficult to miss his passion on the subject.

'The statistics are daunting,' he began

‘Domestic violence in Nigeria is on the up and up. 50% of women have been battered by their husbands. Shockingly, more educated women (65%) are in this terrible situation as compared with their low income counterparts (55%). Most endure, believing they have nowhere to go and in any case, believing, for good reason, that the law will not protect them (a staggering 97.2% of them are not prepared to report to the Nigeria Police). Only 4 states of the Federation (Lagos is one of them)’

he went on to emphasize by counting his fingers,

‘only ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR states of the federation have passed laws against the insidious crime, whilst several Bills against it languish in our male-dominated National Assembly. Of the states that have passed it, the law is yet to be fully tested. Only recently in Lagos State, a 29 year old banker, Titilayo Arowolo, was killed by her husband, Akolade, in a most gruesome manner.’

he stopped talking briefly to look at the shocked host, then he continued

‘Before that, the scandalous story of wife battering by the Nigerian High Commissioner to Kenya, Dr. Wilcox Wigwe and the Deji of Akure, Adesina Adepoju now deposed, who engaged his Olori, Olori Bolanle, (now deceased) in a public brawl made the rounds, thus bringing the issue of

spousal abuse once again to the front burner.’

He paused briefly to catch his breath and ensure that he was still communicating, then he continued.

‘More than 35% of females are sexually harassed in their childhood, a growing number of rape cases go unreported daily and many women live in abusive relationships but are too scared to speak up about it or simply walk away.’

He also spoke about a domestic help who was raped by her employer. The domestic help took the case to court but rather than receive justice, she was placed behind bars. She was charged for libel.

In another instance, a teenage girl was raped by her uncle. The mother of the girl took the case to court but after a few ups and downs the case was thrown out, the judge claimed that there was lack of corroboration. (There was no witness to the crime)

He explained that the psychological effect of these acts remains with the victim of this domestic violence for many years and it gradually affects their relationship with the opposite sex much later in life.

I found myself loving this man's genuine passion for young girl like myself. He understood the kind of hell I called my father's house. Mo, the host of the TV show, was also thrilled by her guest and she went on to announce his contact information.

'That is all we can take on today's edition of the program, please join us same time next week', she said

The programme ended but not before I took down his phone number. I said a quick prayer,
'Lord God, please let this be our deliverer'

That night, I dialled his number but his assistant picked the call. I began to explain all that had happened and she quickly asked,
'Would you still be with this phone in 15minutes, I want Mr. Ernest to return your call personally'

'Yes, I would try to be with the phone'
I replied, trying very hard not to sound too scared or excited.
I quickly put the phone on vibrate mode and waited for his call. Within 10 minutes, the phone vibrated,

'Mr Oga ! You no come club today abi ? You no wan pay me my moni abi ?'

The voice on the other side was definitely not for me. I quickly ended the call and prayed that unwanted calls didn't come through again.

'Ring ! Ring !'

I looked closely at the number, I was tempted to ignore the call but on a second thought, I picked the call but didn't say a word.

'Hello Good evening, I am Ernest , I received ...'

But before he could continue, I interrupted excitedly,

'I called you earlier, I need help. Please help us !'

'Sweetheart, please calm down, what is your name ?'

'My name is Tolani' I replied sharply.

My voice became whispers and I told him EVERYTHING. He didn't interrupt me but before I started, he hinted me that he would record the conversation but I didn't mind.

'So that is the entire truth and I know that if we are not rescued we might end up like our mother'

I concluded.

'Tolani, where do you live?' He asked

I told him where we lived and he promised that he would be there in the morning but that I should stay calm.

I tried to be calm but that night was very long. So many thoughts came rushing through my mind,

'What if I had just poured fuel on a wild fire?'

'What if I had just made matters worse?'

'What would my mother do?'

I knew the answer to the last question, my mother would prefer to be silent, but then, that action led her to an early grave.

The following morning there was a knock on the door. I was greeted by a familiar face; he was accompanied by 3 fierce looking police men.

'Are you Tolani ?' He asked

'Yes I am'

'Where is your sister ?'

He enquired further

My father came to the door,

'Yes, how may I help you?'

He asked, almost shouting.

'Are you this girl's father?'

Mr. Ernest asked

My father almost sent a slap to my face

'You this stupid girl, what have you done this time?'

'She hasn't done anything wrong; you are yet to answer my question. Are you her father?'

He enquired again

'Yes' he responded carefully

'Sir, I have a warrant for your arrest'

'What is my offense?' He asked in a weak tone of voice.

'When we get to the police station you would get the required information'

He wasn't allowed to pick his phone or make a call. My sister and I were also taken to the police station. There was no school for us on that day, but, it didn't matter, this was more important.

The investigations went on for almost a week, we had enough information to put my father behind bars for child abuse, rape and possibly man slaughter (or is it woman slaughter?), but, Mr. Ernest decided to keep the

press away and he also insisted that it was in my best interest to keep the case out of the court.

I was young but I knew we had enough information to put my father behind bars but he insisted that we settle outside court instead. Perhaps because of his experience with such cases, perhaps because he wanted to shield us from the rigours of the court. Whatever it was, I had to just believe that he had good intentions.

He told us that there was a couple in Port Harcourt that was willing to adopt us. Without disclosing the adoption plan to my father, he approached him with an offer.

'I want to make you an offer' he began

My father paid him so much attention; he was like a sinking man holding on to a straw.

'We would close this case if you agree to drop custody of these girls'

My father didn't even give it a second thought, we didn't matter to him. He jumped at the offer like a child greedy for ice cream.

He signed a few papers and we were free, he had agreed that he would not make any contact with us.

I was happy that my sister and I were eventually getting some kind of justice although I felt like he didn't pay for his crime.

My sister and I were adopted by a wonderful family. My father kept to the terms of the agreement but I didn't miss him, how could I? After everything he put us through.

Many years have gone by and I may never completely be free from the torment of my ugly childhood. It is difficult for me to look at any man and not recall all I suffered in my father's house. I went on to study Law at the University of Ife, I made a silent resolve to be a voice for women and girls everywhere who experienced domestic violence. I may never find the courage to forgive my father or love any man but I am certain about one fact, I will never be a whisperer anymore.

You are wondering who I am; what is my name? You are trying to guess and you are convinced you have seen me before...I look familiar and you're right. You have seen me before; I am your sister, your daughter, your cousin, and your mother. I am your friend, your colleague at the office and the neighbor whose muffled cries you sometimes hear; I am the acquaintance you share small talk with in Church and the woman you

exchange pleasantries with while waiting outside your children's school.

I am one of the many victims of domestic violence. Today, I tell my story for all of us who have been and still are victims. I hope my story stirs you to action. I hope it moves you to make a difference in your own little way.

My honest advice to any individual experiencing domestic violence is this; 'Speak up, walk away, stop whispering, talk to someone, and don't end up like my mother - patient, hopeful, long suffering but eventually dead'.



STATISTICS (Domestic Violence)

- In 2009, approximately 3.3 million child abuse reports and allegations were made involving an estimated 6 million children.
- One-third to two-thirds of child maltreatment cases involve substance use to some degree.
- Children whose parents abuse alcohol and other drugs are three times more likely to be abused and more than four times more likely to be neglected than children from non-abusing families.
- As many as two-thirds of the people in treatment for drug abuse reported being abused or neglected as children.
- 14% of all men in prison in the USA were abused as children.
- 36% of all women in prison were abused as children.
- Children who experience child abuse & neglect are 59% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28% more likely to be arrested as an adult, and 30% more likely to commit violent crime.
- A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds

STATISTICS (Domestic Violence) contd.

- More than five children die every day as a result of child abuse
- According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in 2001, over 1,300 murders were committed by a spouse or intimate partners. These numbers equate to nearly four murders a day
- More women are injured by their partners than by rape, auto accidents and muggings combined.
- Over 25% of women have been victims of violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in their lifetime.
- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, homicide is the leading cause of death for women on the job, and 20% of those murders were at the hands of their partners

Sources :

<http://www.safeatworkcoalition.org/dv/factsandstats.htm>

<http://www.dvrc-or.org/domestic/violence/resources/C61/>

<http://www.childhelp.org/pages/statistics>

<http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/domestic-violence-when-the-law-fails-to-protect/98863/>

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The Book

This is indeed a WOW effort, the subtle manner in which you combined fact and fiction is both exciting and scary. Well done Peter !

SAMUEL OKECHUKWU
Top FM, Lagos

Peter, this is indeed a beautiful story, inspiring, revealing and just on-point. More grease to your elbow, this is a wonderful book.

KEMI OTUYEMI
OIS, Lagos

The Author

Peter Okolie is dynamic and self motivated individual. He is regularly referred to as Peter Positive by people who know him. This is because of his positive outlook to life and it's opportunities. He regularly combines the roles of Author, Entrepreneur and I.T Enthusiast. He is a very patriotic Nigerian and a people-person.

Peter Okolie is one of Nigeria's emerging brands in People and Organizational Development. He is a light and one of the influential young people in Nigeria on account of his various people development projects. His most outstanding virtue is Diligence.

From an exceptional background in Agricultural Engineering at the Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Peter Okolie made a deliberate detour to follow his passion for community development and Information Technology.

