

# HONOURABLE

Kunle Daramola (Nigeria)



*(Yokolu Yokolu, kowa tan bi Iyawo gbo' ko sanle, Oko yo ke.)*  
(It is now over, the wife has defeated the husband, and the husband grows a hunch on his back.)

She repeats the song again, then again, moving her waist steadily as she continues sweeping the littered compound.

Yetunde is a local petty trader who sells all sorts of alcoholic drinks at Odo'ro Park. Her goods are the basic necessities in the NURTW Park, because the drivers can scarcely do without stomaching strong drinks and smoke cigarette. Some of her popular goods which are also her customers favourites are *ale, ato, ogidiga, jagaban, kick and start, alomo bitters, tekanle*, among many other concoctions.

She is popular among commercial drivers and motorcyclists at the park, thanks to her beauty. Her popularity has also soared as a result of her expertise in mixing alcoholic drinks, which she would always swear makes the men perform ruggedly in bed with their wives and concubines.

She always warns that failure to 'perform' after taking her specially mixed 'alcoholic concoction' may lead to grievous repercussions. The men know what she implies. She is also known for a unique feature she possesses. Yetunde is plump with a huge backside that calls the attention of men wherever she passes. This feature earns

her a nickname among the drivers, who all long to have a taste of her, but all their efforts seem to be futile.

They call her Iya Alagbo Fatty BomBom, a name no one knows if she likes or not. Daily, she goes about her business without minding the inspiration behind the name. Being the favourite in the park, with the passion of an ambitious woman and the level at which she works, she is worthy to be on 'Forbes' alongside other rich women but on her most lucrative day, the money she makes can be comparable to a secondary school student's weekly pocket money. But even still, she never stops working for the upkeep of her family, and especially the schooling of her two children.

At home, there is a lanky and slightly tall man, with eyeballs threatening to run off their sockets. His eyes are always stained red like that of a tied cow awaiting the butcher's knife. The redness of the eyes is as a result of a greedy addiction to smoking cigarettes and Indian hemp, and constant drinking of *garri*, the grain-like meal made out of cassava.

Isaki is Yetunde's husband. They never got married legally, neither were they conjugally solemnised in church. They met when Yetunde was just finishing her secondary school studies. Yetunde fell in love with him, not because he was a handsome man, he was really not, but because as at that time, Isaki was a journeyman or *lebira* which means labourer. He helped the bricklayers to mix sand and cement and carry bricks, and when he was not doing this, he would borrow a friend's motorcycle at night to make money by transporting people through short distances. So, he was at that time the richest man Yetunde had seen in her young life. Head over heels in love with the young man, their relationship only lasted six months when

Yetunde got pregnant. It is now four years, and they already have two children, carrying the pregnancy of the third.

On a sunny Monday, a busy working day even for the laziest worker, Isaki remains at home on the premise that there are no jobs in Nigeria. He even stopped working as a labourer claiming that it made him tired, without enough energy to satisfy his wife in bed. But if you ask Yetunde, she isn't complaining.

"I would rather stay home and dream," he would always reiterate. After a long spree of smoking Indian hemp with street boys and urchins at their usual location, known as 'three-flat' because of its enormous capacity to contain many of the smokers at a time, he eventually finds his way back to his apartment. This is a one room-squalor where he resides with Yetunde, their two children, brown and wicked rats, unsatisfied and rough but high-flying cockroaches, dirty plates, scattered clothes and a rectangular black and white sharp television sitting on a diminutive shelf opposite a brown-clothed tattered long couch, of which beg bugs have colonised and exudes a repugnant smell of urine daily soaked in it by their children.

Isaki half-consciously lands on the couch stationed at one corner of the room. He struggles to mumble some words, and in less than a minute, begins to sing the Nigerian national anthem, unconscious of the lyrics, but totally given to passion, as if face to face with the 200 million Nigerians, and about to give an inaugural speech. He dramatically adjusts the position of his head, placing it slightly on the edge of the couch, so as to breathe freely; he drowns into Dream Land.

*(On a TV show with a female journalist, Isaki elegantly dressed in Agbada sits opposite the journalist.)*

*Interviewer:* Good morning to all our viewers. We welcome you once again to Political Watch. With me today is a seasoned legislator, philanthropist and servant to the people, representing Ijesa East Constituency, Hon. Itesiwaju Isaki. You are welcome, sir. It is an honour to meet you.

*Hon. Isaki:* It's all my pleasure. Although I have been busy carrying out the people's business but an occasion like this is worth it.

*Interviewer:* We are extremely delighted to have you on the show this morning. Briefly, tell us u about the recent controversy surrounding the leaked video and pictures online, where you were caught holding an enormous calabash in your left hand, and numerous ladies' underwear in your right hand. This has earned you the nickname 'Night Crawler'.

*Hon. Isaki:* Miss Interviewer, there is no gainsaying, and I love your straightforwardness. You are right about the video and pictures in circulation but it hurts me because these are not meant for public consumption. You see, precarious moments require precarious steps. The event that was captured was a monthly prayer routine I do as a patriotic intercessor for this country against unemployment, corruption, bad governance and under-development. You see, I, as an Honourable, (adjusts his Agbada) love the youth in my state, and I want them to be successful in life. They are the leaders of tomorrow. So the prayer was specially organised to intercede for them.

*Interviewer:* Honourable, that is thoughtful of you, not all public office holders would have the interest of the youth at heart. And to make yourself that vulnerable just to pray for the youth every month beats anyone's imagination. However, the next question is that what were the things contained in the calabash, and were they truly ladies' panties?

*Hon. Isaki:* God bless you. A special prayer for our special land demands special sacrifices for the special gods, you know. Filled in the calabash was the blood of three able-bodied men, who volunteered to be eternally useful for the prosperity of our land, and also there was the need for twenty-one panties of virgins, who were carefully selected by my boys for the success of the intercessory prayer.

*Interviewer:* Indeed, you have the pain of the masses at heart. I hope you can tell the viewers, who have conflicting views about the viral video in detail what will be the outcome of the prayer.

*Hon. Isaki:* Thank you. Recently I have learnt that Nigeria is one of the poorest countries in the world, and I have decided to change the narrative. So I consulted my Pastors, Imams and Babalawos and they agreed that there is only one solution. You see, over time, you have heard that ‘yahoo boys’ (cyber thieves) kill people and also steal ladies’ underwear for money. This, according to my research, has truly been successful anyway. So I said to myself, as a thoughtful politician who has the pain of his people at heart that utilising this same style not for selfish reasons like that of the ‘yahoo boys’, but for the interest of the nation will be a national benefit. Instead of the ladies’ panties to be used by some boys to buy a Benz it can be used for the enrichment of the nation. And if you look at it critically, it is a way of diversifying our economy, from oil production and agriculture to human resources. It is a brilliant idea. This can add to our revenue and boost our economy. From now henceforth, we shall experience a new nation with no recession.

*Interviewer:* I salute your burning flair for the progression of this country. As we end the show tonight, I hope other public office holders and politicians will learn from you and also foreign countries

will pick a lesson or two from your nationalistic action. This is to be celebrated than the fight against apartheid by Nelson Mandela, Negritude by Leopold Senghor or The Civil Rights Movement by Martin Luther King Jnr. Thank you for coming to this show, Hon. Itesiwaju Isaki. I hope that you will come again to our show.

*Hon. Isaki:* I am responsible for the masses and I will do anything to make their dreams come true.

The months that followed marked the period for the general election. Hon. Isaki gained more popularity in his state, geopolitical zone and the nation at large. He declined many calls for interviews. Since granting that interview with the local TV station, tons of journalists from around the world tried to fix an interview with him for as short as five minutes, but he was always occupied. He was vying to retain a seat at the state house of assembly for the third time, which could also see him become the speaker of the house if he won.

A few weeks later, Hon. Isaki was announced as the winner of his constituency and as the house reconvened, he was voted as the Honourable Speaker of the sacrosanct house of assembly, with the unflinching support of all the members of the house.

He climbs the podium of the house, making him taller and visible to everyone. And in his exorbitant Agbada that still suffers the incapability of concealing his protruded belly, Honourable Itesiwaju Isaki bursts with an awkward loud voice, "Arise O compatriots, Nigeria call obey..."

On the other end of reality, Yetunde rushes into the room sweating profusely her wrapper almost falling off her waist. She checks her boxes to bring out the remaining alcohol and already packaged concoction but all have been consumed by Isaki and the street boys, and only the empty bottles filled a filthy basket placed under the couch. Yetunde, on seeing this is vexed to her bones. She storms

outside like a mad woman, carrying a big empty bucket, which she uses to fetch water from the well and adds in some granite. She rushes back inside and pours it on the dream-absorbed Honourable Speaker even as he continues to sing the national anthem loudly.

He vehemently jumps back to life as the cold granite water lands on him. He is drenched and wounded. And seeing the damage done to him by his wife, and to his biggest surprise and agony, he is woken from his glorious dream. Without uttering a word, he thunders a heavy slap on Yetunde's cheek but she is all prepared for the altercation. She responds to Isaki with two roaring slaps which send him across the couch. Before Isaki can pull himself together, she pounces on him with several punches to his face, until he starts bleeding and cannot lift a limb.

She then sits on him, with her bottom pinning him down to the floor, knowing that Isaki is too weak to stand on his feet. She continues singing her song and dances to shame her husband who is now helplessly lying on the ground.

*“Yokolu Yokolu ko wa tan bi, Iyawo gbo’ko san le, oko yo ke.”* (It is now over, the wife has defeated the husband, the husband grows a hunch on his back.)

# THE HEAD THAT TURNS

Jacqueline Fanta Mudiria (South Sudan)



It is the morning of the first day of January 2063. Zamba was woken up by the ruffling noise of two cockerels fighting just outside her window. She was too lazy to get out of bed and her mind wasn't clear yet as she picked up her phone to check her messages on WhatsApp. A nagging yawn overpowered her and she let it go, ending with one loud groan. Her mother making breakfast next door heard her and immediately burst into a loud laughter.

"You better drag those young bones of yours out of bed young lady. It's 2063 and here you are still stuck between the sheets like a magnet. Come over and give me a hand," her mother said.

The relationship between mother and daughter was the envy of all relatives and friends. People took to calling them sisters.

"So, what do you want me to do?" she asked.

"Well, for starters, set the table for breakfast?"

As she went to the cabinet, her mother started humming a song she had never heard her sing before. It had something to do with life in the 20th century. Curious to know more, she asked her mother to tell her some inspirational story from that era.

"Around the late 20th century," her mother started, "in a large African country called Nudas, was a beautiful, brave intelligent and hardworking young girl named Hipaingba. She lived with her extended family who included her mother, aunties, six younger siblings, grandparents and first cousins. Her mother was an



extremely hardworking woman who raised Hipaingba with her siblings single-handedly because her father was deceased.

“Hipaingba’s mother cultivated land and the produce was used for home consumption. The surplus would be sold and the money was usually saved for only essential things and school fees. Hipaingba and her siblings every day after school would help their mother either by selling the produce in the market or by farming in the garden. Even though they did not have much, they were surrounded with so much love. Hipaingba worked tremendously hard in school and at home with the hope of one day making a change in her family’s life.

“Unfortunately, Nudas, where Hipaingba and her family lived was experiencing many conflicts that was tearing it apart and making life quite unsafe for them. Hipaingba and her family therefore decided to flee to the neighbouring country of Carep with the hope of a peaceful and safe place to stay. While in Carep as refugees, life for Hipaingba and her family got even harder. Hipaingba had to wake up early in the morning to fetch water from the well before getting ready and starting the long trek to school. Though she was a bright child, she had little or no hope of continuing her secondary education, under these conditions. But she kept on, nevertheless. “Little did she know that the United Nations was promoting girl-child education through what was called Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal number 4. Hipaingba was lucky to win a scholarship under this effort. She had hope of continuing her education as she knew that it was the only hope that she had for her family and herself.”

“Why are you telling me this mother?” asked Zamba.

“Because there are lessons for you here, my daughter that I want you to take as you enter 2063,” she responded.

“You see,” mother went on, “Hipaingba got pregnant and for a moment her world came crushing down. As you would expect, her family was disappointed in her and she too was disappointed in herself because it suddenly hit her that her future may never be the same. However, as it turns out, this experience only made Hipaingba more determined to continue with her education and succeed in life. She was lucky to have a family that continued to support her materially and morally.

“Hipaingba named her daughter Mboriundo, meaning God helps. Amidst all the odds, Hipaingba completed her education and was the first of seven siblings to graduate with a university degree. She secured a job that allowed her to live comfortably, support her family and even sponsor nearly all her siblings to school. Two of her siblings reaching up to the university level and helping her to support the family.”

Zamba’s mother paused for a moment, seemingly overcome with emotion at this girl’s determination and the thought that negative things that happen in life should not deter one from succeeding.

“Are you okay mother?” asked Zamba, now almost forgetting her breakfast.

Mother continued as if she had not been interrupted, “Hipaingba’s daughter Mboriundo became an international student living in Canada, but was so moved by her mother’s experience that she vowed to prioritise education above everything she did. She even set herself a goal of contributing to the development of Africa by empowering other young persons to stay in school because she believed that education was the way to a bright future.

“I am telling you this because 50 years ago, African leaders came up with a document that by this year 2063, all of Africa’s children would live decent lives, without harassment and with decent livelihoods. The United Nations also came up with the 2030 Agenda that was meant to achieve the same objectives. I want you to read

and understand all the goals and ideals in that document and how it can facilitate the progress and implementation of any form of developments in the world, so that you can see for yourself whether those goals have been achieved

“At the same time, look at yourself to see what kind of life you are living. Does it meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals as planned, especially Goal number 4 on education? The future is in your hands, Zamba.

“Now eat some breakfast, my girl. I’m proud of you and I love you,” she concluded as she turned her head towards her daughter in a way that said, ‘You’d better not let me down girl.’

For an 18-year-old girl, this was too much to ask because she had not yet processed it properly. So, all she said was, “Don’t worry mother. I will be even better than that girl.”

At the back of her mind, she knew her mother was right. Zamba, after all, had just completed her high school and did not want to further her education. In fact, all she wanted was to get married to her boyfriend and be a mother of five children by the age of 25. But now she was reconsidering her decision. She decided to find out more about the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030.

What she found out was that girl-child education had become prioritised by all governments. Large budgets were being given to the initiative because the results were tremendous everywhere. Girls were not only performing better than boys in all subjects, but those who entered the job market were also excelling in their fields. Families were stable because, as they say, educated mothers are the backbones of stable families. Children were growing healthier and half of the presidents in Africa were women, all thanks to girl-child education. This inspired Zamba.

She then decided to look for work that summer of 2063 and save up enough money for college. Zamba enrolled into university and started pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. Her mother was happy and so was she. Then tragedy struck just when she thought she was on track towards achieving her education goal. Her father passed away while she was in her fourth year.

The death of her beloved father devastated her so much that she lost her focus and vision. Zamba dropped out of university and started drinking and doing drugs until one day she was so intoxicated to the point of hospitalisation that she almost lost her life. Laying on the hospital bed with so many drips on her hands, she slowly opened her eyes and seated beside her was her mother. Their eyes met and she remembered the story of Hipainga.

She needed to get back on track, if only to make her mother proud. After being discharged from the hospital, she resumed her studies, eventually graduating with a degree in Social Work. With this near-death experience, she started a program at the university to help students facing similar problems. Her mother and the wider family could not have been prouder of their baby girl. But it also spoke to how parents need to be patient with their children and not give up on them, even in their most trying time. At the same time, family support is fundamental to the success of a girl-child, giving a new ring to the saying that it takes a village to raise a child.