MY STORY

TITLE

AGONY OF WIDOWHOOD

CHAPTER I

Ajoke is a 42years old widow in a small town in Oyo state formerly known as old Oyo empire. She was a mother of 4 beautiful children; Seyi who was 22, Temitope was 20 and her twins Taye and kehinde were 16years. Ajoke lost her husband to an illness no one could cure; her husband kunle was a famous hunter in their town and was known for the famous games he won during hunting. He died at a very young age and left Ajoke all the responsibilities to handle.

Ajoke was a trader/ business woman in her community; although not many married women were given the opportunity to work as it was believed that the women were meant to look after the family and cater for the needs for her children while it was the duty of the husband to work. Ajoke’s husband kunle, gave her the opportunity to work. She sold tie and dye and also hawked the best local delicacies in their village; these helped her a lot after her husband’s death. Many women admired the courage she had and women wanted to friends with her. At the time, society focused on widowed women and had an unending list of Do’s and Don’ts guiding them; Ajoke barely cared about society and what they thought about her. She felt she was still young and a owed a lot of responsibilities to her children. Her first child, worked with the local police in their community, while her second child was a teacher at local elementary class, the colonial masters had introduced while her two last children attended the elementary school and during their free time assisted her with the farm work and also to hawk her meals in the evenings.

Kunle’s family member insisted Ajoke remarries and get a male figure for her children but she didn’t believe she needed any male assistance that wasn’t her husbands’.

CHAPTER II

Ajoke was so concerned about her daughter who had being getting advances from different men in the community. She was hoping she would receive a scholarship and go with the white missionaries to study but with series of events that her played over the weeks had made her fear because her daughter Temitope had started given into the idea of marriage instead on focusing on studying. She had hoped and prayed the way the white missionaries had thought her how to pray.

Ajoke sat at the terrace of her house after her daily hustle trying to rest; two men walked in and greeted her. Ajoke was quite surprised because since her husband’s demise, people stopped visiting her; Ajoke exchange pleasantries with them and asked why they had visited. They informed her that the council of chiefs and the oba will like to see her at noon the following day and she wondered why she was being summoned again after she turned their offer of remarrying the last time her husband’s relative reported to the OBA. The following day she went were she was summoned and all arrival they were seated and she knelt down and greeted the oba and after that he asked her to sit down.

The oba had requested that she give up her farm and other valuable items that belong to her husband while he was alive; he said according to the custom widows are supposed to remarry a year after the death of their husbands. Ajoke had believed that women were capable of managing after the demise of their husbands; she had not gotten over the facts that she had just lost her husband few months back and society had started treating her badly. The Oba gave her a week to reconsider remarrying or she gives up her entire properties to the Oba.

Ajoke left the palace in anger, disappointment and in fear; she was scared that she might not be able to fend for herself and children as the little money her older children earned wasn’t sufficient for all of them. She couldn’t sleep all night; everything that had happened earlier kept on replaying in her head. She kept on wondering how to go about the whole situation and she knew sooner or later her husband’s relative will request her daughter got married out too. She needed to think of a solution as fast as she could. Ajoke’s daughter on the other hand her dreamt of studying but the series of events that had played over the past months had made her doubt if any of her dreams would come through. She had secretly started seeing someone who she hoped to settle with and was looking for the right time to inform her mum about him.

CHAPTER III

It had being about 5 days since her visit to the Oba’s palace, she had just returned from a trip she took to the neighbouring village she went to sell some of her tie and dye fabrics, she sat and watched as her children had their dinner and she began to reminisce about her life some months back and how everything seemed fine; while kunle was alive, she never had to work as hard as she did now because his earnings plus hers was enough to carry them for a long time. They were the talk of the town as most people envied their marriage and called them an ideal couple. Not many married men let their wives be independent at the time but Ajoke enjoyed such; people also admired her was because her husband was one of the few men that never took in more than one wife. People said it was because they were newly weds and with time he would get another wife but the older they grew made their bond tighter; she remember days she didn’t have to bother about repairing holes in the roofs or feeding the chicken because her husband was always around to help her with the chores but now it was her duty along sides her son to do these things for the family and they were about collect her major sources of income from her. She hadn’t decided if she would remarry or give up her husband’s properties; her older children were not aware of anything that was going on and she wasn’t going to drag them into it.

Ajoke made up her mind to remarry, she decided to play along with what they wanted. The day had come to let her decision known to the elders and the Oba; she dressed up in her adire and set off for the palace. On getting there, you overheard some of the guards discussing and saying that the king wants to take a new wife and they are sure he is interested In that widow Ajoke; she took a minute to process all that and she then understood why they threatened to seize all her husband’s properties from her. Ajoke entered the palace and behaved like she had not just gotten the most shocking news of the day; the meeting went ahead, and Ajoke was confused because she had made that decision out of helplessness and now this, it was too much to handle but she decided she will agree to it. She made her decision known and everyone in the room was happy on hearing it but she asked for the men she was to select from; usually when a widow was to remarry, the cabinet members, would provide the league of men the widow will pick from. They told Ajoke that her groom will be presented to her in the coming week and that she should go home and inform her children. Ajoke had to think of something fast because she wasn’t ready to remarry talk less of remarrying the oba who already had 4 wives which he her just married the last wife a month back; when she got home she told her older children everything that had happened and she also told them that she would come up with something but she will need their help with everything. She planned to send her younger children to her maternal home town as her mum lived there, while she stayed back and handled everything; the next day her children set off for their maternal village that was not so far from their own village, she needed to protect them from the series of events that will happen in the coming weeks.

CHAPTER IV

The week had come when she is supposed to pick her husband. She was presented with 4 suitors and the 4th suitor was not made known to anyone, everyone at the square murmured and wondered who he might be. The first suitor was a hunter like her late husband, they sang his praises but she didn’t like him and he was disqualified. The second suitor was a farmer, according to the villagers he produced the biggest yams in the whole community; he was already married and was seeking a second wife and Ajumoke declined it. The 3rd suitor, he was boasting of how fertile they are in their family and that he could give her triplets; all fell to deaf ears as Ajumoke rejected them all. The last suitor that wasn’t revealed had only made them introduce him but not show his face and Ajumoke knew that it was the king. The oba had made a deal with Ajumokes’ husband’s relatives that if they can make Ajumoke marry him then the whole properties will be theirs, so after the display, her husband’s relative started asking her what she wanted to do next then the eldest of them suggested they see the Oba and discuss. She already knew what their plans were; she was just happy that her children were away from all these things happening.

They visited the Oba the next day, and while they were talking, the Oba then brought up the proposal to marry her and that she can get everything her husband owned times 2 if she married him; she already knew their plans and so she decided to play along.

Ajumoke told the Oba to give her 3 market days and they will complete the marriage rights and she will move in; unknown to the Oba she has other plans. Ajumoke asked her older children to go and stay with her mum in their maternal home because she was about to make the most deadliest thing ever in her life. The following day, her children set out before sunrise so no one saw them leave; although her children were leaving the place they grew up and called home. Leaving their friends and Temitope really wanted to marry her heartthrob but all that couldn’t happen because they had to make this one sacrifice for their mother’s sanity.

After their departure, Ajumoke had to face the toughest part of her life especially being a widow; she secretly cultivated all her farm produce and donated the piece of land to the white missionaries to live on it and gather people to preach. She knew the village council will find it difficult to collect it back from them; also if Kunle were to be alive he would have done the same thing as he always decribed his family to be greedy.

She then informed her customers that they might be a little change as she might no longer be available and told them in due time they will now about it all. Ajumoke sold out and gave out her husband’s properties except the house; this was the last memory of her husband that she had.it had being more than a week since her children left but she wasn’t so worried because she knew they were safe where they were and they would take care of each other properly.

The Oba had being waiting patiently for the marriage rites to be performed so his new bride can move in while Ajumoke was trying her best so she could flee the community in no time but since the announcement that the Oba was taking a new bride she didn’t want to raise an alarm by running away; so, she decided to take things easily people started avoiding her because she had rejected all her suitors but they were unaware she was going to be the king’s new wife. She had felt so lonely in the absences of her children and her late husband but society didn’t allow her enjoy the little things she had left.

CHAPTER V

The marriage rites of the wedding had been fixed and it had not been easy over the weeks and she couldn’t believe she was actually about to marry. After Ajmoke was able to give her husband’s property out, she knew it was time to do the needful. She waited till the night before the ceremony ad fled the village to her maternal home town were little or nobody knew her. The day of the ceremony arrived and she was no were to be found and then they noticed that all their belongings were gone; the Oba orders that kunle’s relative to be punished as he accuses them to be being the master mind behind everything. Ajumoke was able to unite with her children. Society made widows look helpless and that they couldn’t survive without a man in their life. Pre colonial Nigeria, early marriage was common and women were still made to suffer after their husband’s pass away. Ajumoke was a woman of such circumstance and she decided to change her fate by herself.

She lived a lonely but fulfilling one and her children were successful at what they did.