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MATRIC NUMBER: 17/SMS06/002

COURSE TITLE: ENTERTAINMENT MANAGEMENT

COURSE CODE: TEM 312

MARRIED TO THE GODS

CHAPTER ONE

Mazi enynnaya is a very kind hearted man who is married to Ngbeke. He and wife were not able to give have children for a long time. His wife has been through a lot in the hands of her husband’s family due to childlessness. Every time he comes back from work, he always sees her crying or sad. Enyinnaya loves his wife because she is very hard working; she goes to the farm and very good at house shores and cook real delicious meals. Her husband is a palm wine tapper who taps the freshest wine. He goes to a far market called Uzoato to sell them. most times he comes home after selling ,very weak and tired. Their’s is a very simple, quiet and loving family except to the fact that they have no children. This fact disturbs not only the wife but also Enyinnaya at night dough he tries to act like he was not bothered. He does encourage his wife to have hope for tomorrow.

It happened that one day in the night in the room with her husband who was fast at sleep and the wife deep in her taught. Thinking for a positive solution to her problem so she taught of going to the chief priest and decided to talk to her husband about it. She woke up her husband. He was eager to know why she woke him up from bed at that time. She asked her husband to follow her, to go to the chief priest. They talked a while before he agreed that they should go tomorrow. On the next day, early in the morning he carried his tapping bag which contains his materials for tapping wine and he fastened his head lamp which enables him to see in the dark around four in the morning. He then put around his neck a climbing rope (etteh) for climbing the palm tree, he also carried along a big palm wine keg for collecting palm wine. When he reaches the top, he would transfer the wine from the keg which is tied on top of the tree to a bigger keg, then comes back down the way that he came up. He did all his routine except going to the market to sell the drinks, so he quickly sent the drinks to his friend to sell for him. His wife also quickly did all her domestic works. As early as 7am, Mazi enyinnaya and his wife were on their way to the shrine to see the high priest. After normal exchange of morning greetings, Enyinnaya presented some money as a gift offering and asked the chief priest to enquire for them why they are childless. The chief priest did some consultation and told them that there is a problem but he was going to help them. He said they are going to do some sacrifice and cleansing in the river for the wife. He gave them list of what to buy which include: male goat, tubers of yam, cola nuts, white fabrics, they gave the priest money {ego ayoro} to buy mystic materials for cleansing. He told Mazi that he should prepare his wife for the cleansing, she should wear white to perform the cleansing. He was told to return in two weeks’ time. In two weeks’ time, they both went back to the shrine with all the things they bought for the rituals. His wife was dressed in White. The chief priest was ready for the rituals. He did the sacrifice and incantation, from there they went to the river where they performed cleansing rituals for her. After the ritual, the chief priest then told them that the water goddess has been appeased, they all went back to the shrine. He told Mazi that his wife will give birth to a baby. The couple was happy to hear it. He told them to be patient for a while, that the gods will give them a child at their own time. A year has past but she was not disturbed anymore because she believed the words of the chief priest. Enene has been feeling sick in the morning and also have been throwing up. Her husband was wondering what was wrong with her because she is hardly sick. She took herbs for fever and vomiting which did not work for her. She then decided to go to her mother’s house. When she arrived her mother’s house, she met her mother breaking palm canal. She greeted her mother Who quickly stood up to hugged her, saying, it has been. The mother asked her why she was losing weight, she also commented that her temperature was high. She replied that she does not know what’s wrong because she has tried all the herbs for malaria and vomiting. Her mother smiled and asked her when did she see her last menstrual circle. She replied it has been quite some time. Enane’ mother wanted to be sure that what she is thinking is correct by doing more investigation on her daughter’s body like checking her eyes and other things. When Enene’ mother had finished her investigation, She told her daughter that she was pregnant. Enene and her mother started to cry and thank the gods for taking away their shame. She begged her mother not to tell anyone yet and she agreed. Enene’ mother gave her herbs to be taking for strengthen. Enene went back home happily, when her husband came back she told him the good news and how she found out that she was pregnant. He was happy and they both thank the gods because he was worried about the childless condition of his wife. The husband told her that she should not be going out, she should be careful on the kind of works that she does because he did not want to lose the child. The wife reduced her work load so that she will not stress herself and her unborn child. When her husband finish selling, he will quickly buy things from the market and come home to assist his wife. From then on, he does the farm work alone most of the time. It happened that when her time is due, she and her husband were sleeping, she started feeling very uncomfortable and woke her husband up who was fast as sleep. When Mazi understood he ran to the house of the elderly woman who helps in the delivery of babies in the neighborhood. He was lucky that night to get her. The elderly woman came with her daughter. When she came to the room where his wife was, she asked him to get some water and clothing. The woman was in labor up to six in the morning. The husband was just encouraging his wife to be patient that it will be over. He waited but he was kind of scared because of how his wife was screaming. When he finally heard a cry of the baby he was excited and also wanted to know how his wife is fairing. Then when the elderly woman has finished, She presented a very beautiful baby girl to her husband. He carried the baby to the wife. they were happy as they looked into the baby’ beautiful face. They named her Ugomma because of her beauty. The husband was petting the wife while the elderly woman and her daughter were tiding up the birth place. He quickly sent for Anene’ mother. Anene’ mother on getting the good news, quickly packed some food stuffs and ran to her daughter’ house. On getting there, she started singing and dancing. She later settled down to take care of her daughter and grandchild which is called ‘omugwo’ in Igbo tradition. After few days, Mazi resumed normal routine and went to tap and sell his wine. He will first select the very best wine for his nursing wife; palm wine is believed to help breast to produce enough milk. Anene’ mother took care of baby and mother for two months before she went back to her home. Occasionally she will visit her daughter, even when it was time to win the girl, she helped her daughter to win her baby. Ugomma grew in favour with all neighbors. She grew up very beautiful, tall with curves. Her parents do praise her for her beauty. Both parents showed her with love. She is hardworking and obedient. She helps her father I and mother in any way she can. Her mother teaches her how to be a proper woman and a mother. She tells her about the culture, norms and taboos of their village. She warns her to be careful with men. She taught her daughter everything that she needs to know and also to learn more than what she has taught her.

CHARPTER TWO

Ugoma grew into a tall, elegant beautiful young girl, very delight to behold. Before she was ripped for marriage she already had many suitors looking for her hand in marriage. She had a friend who is named udala. They always go everywhere together like going to the stream, fetching fire wood, going to market etc. People know that she respects everyone in the community and did not allow anyone to disgrace her. Ugomma and her parent were not in a hurry to accept anyone hand in marriage for her because they want her to marry the right man. She tries not to put her mind on anyone so that she would not be deceived by anyone. One faithful day, ugomma was going to the market to sell some stuff for her mother when she passed a young man on the way, after few steps she perceived she was being washed; she turned, the young man greeted her and asked her what is her name, where she came from and whose daughter she was. Before she could answer all the questions, Udala her friend came unexpected and joined them from the back. She bailed her shy friend by suppling all the answer to the questions and added that she is ugomma’ best friend. The young man told them his name [Ude]and that he is from the next village, he then took his leave. One evening when Ugomma and her parents were relaxing in their compound, some company knocked and entered the compound. Mazi Anene greeted the visitor and gave them chairs to sit down. Cola nuts were provided to the visitors. They break cola nut amidst prayer and exchange pleasantries. Ude’ parent now told his host that their son Ude saw a cherry in mazi Anene’ house [meaning he saw a girl to marry in his house}. Ugomma’ father asked them the name of the girl in question. Ude replied that it’s Ugomma. Ugomma was called to great the guest, immediately she came out, Ude’ parents loved her without further examination. When they stood up to go, they informed their host that in fourth night, they will come back to know their daughter’ reply. Mazi enyinnaya quickly send enquiry to her cousin Mgborie living in Ude’ neighborhood. Mgborie happily confirmed the young man to be very kind, hardworking and well behaved and respected in the community. Ugomma’ parents were happy that their daughter will be finally settle down with a good man. Ude’ father went back for the reply, he was told that the marriage can go on. Also a list of marriage items were given to Ude’ father. Ude’ family quickly fixed a date for the ceremony, purchasing the marriage items was not a problem because Ude is a successful man who has barn full of yam, cocoyam, a lot of palm trees, cola nut tree and many cassava in his farm. Another thing that made Ude to hasting the marriage is because of his great love for Ugomma. The marriage ceremony was the talk of the town; there were food and drink in abundance for everyone. Ugomma and her mother were showered with many gifts from the inlaws. Later in the evening Ugomma had to go home with her husband, being the only child of her parent, both her and her mother hugged and started crying mercilessly. Their relatives and Udara were consoling both of them, they later gave in to the reality on ground; Ugomma went home with her husband. Ude loved his wife so much, he does everything to keep her happy. Ugomma was a dutiful and obedient wife. Soon ugomma conceived and gave birth to their first child Munachi, after winning the boy, she took in again and born the second son Ezemwa. After the third child umenwa came, one day Ugomma’ husband was playing with his children as he usually does whenever he is relaxing at home. something mysteriously entered his eyes from no were. He tried to clean his eyes using his hand, it was’nt working. The pain was increasing as if someone throw some hot sand in his eyes. So he called out to Ugoma in anguish, she ran to her husband. She first drew some air into the eyes to try to get whatever it was out of his eyes, it didn’t help so she resorted to applying her breast milk, instead of getting beter it got worst. Breast milk application in the eyes was really purpular given that there was no other eye medication then. Each day his eyes were get worst until he became a blind man. One day her husband out of frustration threw something that he was holding at his wife following the direction of her voice. The next morning Ugoma found him dead at his bed. Ugoma screamed for help, Her children rush to her, they found out that their Father is dead. Ugoma and her children were screaming. Their neighbours came running from outside to know wat has happened found out Ude has died. The women started to console her and her two older children. Umenwa at that time was still a baby. The whole village was quiet that day. People were grieving for his death. Ugomma’ family members came to console her. Among the neighbouring women who really helped Ugomma throughout the mourning period was Onoshe’s mother because both of them were from the same village. she sat together with other members of Ugomer’s family. she stayed close to her throughout the burial which lasted for seven days.

CHAPTER THREE

Onoshie is a young fine man who is from the same clan and village as Ude. He was the only child of his parents. He was a very good hunter. His family always had meat to eat. In the evening he goes round the village to set traps for different types of animals. he wakes before dawn to go and check his traps one after the other. The reason why a hunter should wake up before everyone else is to prevent other people from getting to their catch before him also, so that their traps along human tracks would not injure someone, thirdly to prevent other carnivorous animals from eating the catch. At a very young age, Onoshe was betrothed to Agboma who is some years younger than him. Both fathers were good friend, the girl had beautiful features. Bethrothment was an olden days practice by parents to make agreement for their children to marry when they are still young. At times this is made to seal a deal or to extend a good family relationship, other times, when parents sees a very beautiful girl from a good home, they like to secure such girl for their children. After the death of Ugoma’s husband, Onoshe became one of the people that frequently visited her. It came to the point that Ugoma started feeling uncomfortable about his regular visits, coupled with the issue that he always brought game whenever he visited. Ugomma never lacked meat but still felt uncomfortable, wandering what people would say about her. She made up her mind to talk to him about it but in the order hand she did not want to offend him because he had not done anything wrong. So a day came when he brought some game to her, she told him that she did not want game anymore though she was grateful for all the game that he has given her. She would not like to be the center of gossip in the village. He laughed and said that it has not gotten to that.

After six months of mourning, Ugoma started to go to farm in her husband’ farm. Onoshie also started to visit her in the farm. After selling his games in the market, he would head strait to Ugomma’ farm where he would stay until she finished farming. So one day the news got to Onoshe’s mother that her son is always seen at Ugomers farm with her. The mother tried to worn and stop the son from continuing in such act but to no avail, so the mother decided to go to pay Ugoma a visit. On that faithful day, Oneshe’s mother went to ugoma’ house and was told she was at the farm. On getting there, she met Ugomma farming in her farm with Onochie. She started to shout at her to live her son alone alon for her. She threatened to report her to their women group for casting spell on her son. Though the mother did not report her to the women group but she made up her mind that it is time to bring Onoshe,s betrothed wife home. So the mother quickly informed their in-laws, that they will soon come to pay the dawry of their wife. Onoshie’ parents did the wine carrying and did every other thing that was required from them in Igbo culture concerning marriage. Finally they brought home Onoshe’s wife. The parents of Onoshe felt good about their accomplishment. Telling themselves that they had nailed the problem at the head. The father told Onochie, see your young and beautiful wife, you do not have any reason to misbehave again. Agboma the new bride of Onoshe, was a very pretty girl full of life, she loved her husband, full of hopes. She made up her mind to be a very good wife to Onoshe. Onochie’s parents were always there to help Agboma to make sure that their son loves her. The only problem now is Onochie on his own was trying very hard to love his wife but most of the time he found out that he was lonely, always lost in taught. That continued for a while, the wife started to complain to Onochie’s mother, that the husband does not come to bed. The parents tried to solve the problem but to no avail. Agboma got tired and went and reported to her parents. Her mother decided that it was time for her to come home saying her husband was not a man. So Agboma came back to carry her things and she left without telling anyone that she has gone home to her father’s house. When Onochie’ parents could not find her anywhere. They went to her father’ house to look for her. When they got there, they were told they were the ones that asked her to return home because they found out that Onochie was not a man’. After long begging and discussion, they had to go home without their wife and that was the end of the marriage. All those things did not disturb Onochie. He looked calm and immediately went to set his traps that same evening. On the morning of the next day after checking his traps he went straight to Ugoma’s house to greet her. Ugoma on hearing his voice she was terribly afraid and asked him on an urgent voice ‘ what are you doing here’. Onochie asked her what type of greeting was that. Ugoma replied, I just heard that your wife left you and refused to come back and here you are. Do you want the villagers to blame me? Leave me alone!, I am a poor widow and I do not have anyone to defend me. Please leave my house. Onochie replied “I just brought you meat” and drop the meat and left. Ugoma went after him shouting “come and take your meat” but he ignored her

On the forth market day being the Afo market day, onochie paid Ugoma a visit, on getting to her house, he found out that she went to her farm. he went straight there to meet her. Ugoma spotted him from far and hid at the back of a tree without knowing that he had already caught sight of her. He tiptoed to her back and tinkle her at her waist. Ugomma unconsciously started laughing uncontrollable. They started to talk and work together until she suggested that they had work enough for the day. This became a daily routine until it became the talk of the town.

One faithful day, as Ugomma and Onochie were busy at the farm, they were not aware of the arrival of Onochie,s mother and some of her friends to attack them. Suddenly they were surrounded by angry looking women, who rained insult and threw sand on them. They were shouting shameless widow, Akwunakwuna (prostitute) and other insults. Onochie was seriously defending Ugomma, explaining that it was his fault, that he was only helping her with her farm work. After giving Ugoma enough humiliation, they promised to be paying such visit regularly until she stops flirting with their friend’s son. This was the stroke that broke the Carmel’s back. After this incidence, Ugomma vowed never to allow that lover boy to come an inch close to her. That night, she cried her eyes out, her children could not console her, they joined her to cry.

The next morning, before Ugomma and her children woke up, Onoshe was already in her house to know how she was fairing. When Ugomma saw him, she started screaming “you again!,You again! Leave my house”. Onoshe tried to calm her down, but she was furious. The children who had grown fond of him did not understand. They were begged their mother to allow Onoshe to stay. After hot argument Onoshe left with bitterness.

CHARPTER FOUR

Next morning, onoshe,s mother was happy to see her son at home, resting in his room, but at a point it down on her that he has not gone to check his traps, neither did he eat dinner. At this point, the mother started to get worried. She went to his hut to talk to him, he did not respond

After two days, his parent went to his hut, the whole place was smelling, he did not take his bath for two days, neither has he brushed or eaten. They tried to make him to stand up from his bed, he got up and left the hut to climb one big tree in the compound. Onochie slept on a tree that night. Next day his parents went to the tree to make him come down, after much noise from the parents, he eventually came down but left to an unknown destination. His parents searched and waited for their son, but he did not return. Next morning, they weht in search of Onochie Their first point of call was at Ugom’s house. When Ugoma saw Onechie’s mother coming, she became afraid and ran inside her hut to hide. Onochie’ mother started to call her in a gentle manner. Ugoma noticed a change in the woman’s approach, which made her to come out Onochie’s mother in a worried manner asked Ugoma kindly whether she had seen her son since yesterday . Ugoma s replied slowly that she has not seen Onochie since three days. The mother started to cry at this point leaving Ugomma to think that something was definitely wrong. Ugoma tried to console the mother and offered to give her some water but she refused and left to continue her search.

They all searched for him without success. They all agree to inform the king about the missing of Onochie. The king then asked them to sound the community talking drum (this is to gather all men for meeting). At the meeting men were divided into groups to go out to search for Onochie. The parents of Onochie has already sent for a very popular and strong native doctor from a far village called Okekenwa. When he arrived he did inquired from his gods of the place Omochie could be found, and told them the particular bush where he is, he also told them he was on top of an Oshasi tree. This made the work of the young men easier.

when the young men brought him back, the native doctor told his parents that the young man’s heart is tied to Ugomma, therefore anything that will try to separate him from her, will make him mad. The native doctor also told them that Ugomma is married to a very jealous spiritual husband. Who so ever marries Ugomma will die mysteriously. He explained that it was the spirit husband that killed Ugomma’s former husband Ude. He said that he will appease the spirit husband, to allow Ugomma to marry Onochie. He listed somethings needed for the sacrifice. The list includs; white male cock, white goat, white and red materials, colanuts, and big Agama lizard. The parents of Onoche brought the required stuffs except big Agama lizard. The lizard was left for Ugomma’ first son; Munachi and his friends. Munachi And his young friends went to hunt and they brought some which the native doctor rejected. They continued hunting until they saw one big Agama lizard on Onochie’s compound wall. Immediately Munachi saw the lizard, she screamed out to his friends, see the big lizard, he quickly drew his cartaport and shot the lizard, instead of getting the lizard, it was Onoshe that fell down in great agony.

They took Onoshe inside his hut, and the native doctor started administering herbs on him, instead of getting better, he was getting weaker and weaker, even the touch of Ugoma could not help him. After two days Onochie gave up his ghost. The whole family walled for him. Ugomma refused to be consoled; calling the gods to come and kill her.

CHARPTER FIVE

After the death of Onochie , Ugomma went on for some days without food and drink until she lost her mind. She went round the village half naked. The native doctor could not help her. Her parents took her children

This era was a time when missionaries from Portugal were embacked on massive evangelical work in the eastern states’ Christianity came to Nigeria at the 15th century through Augustine Nian and Capuchin monks from Portugal. Many others came but the real success of modern expansion began with freed Christian slaves who began to return to western Africa towards the end of the 18th century. These slaves were probably the main reason why the Christianization was successful in west Africa. One of the most prominent people that were largely responsible for the Christianization of Nigeria is Samuel Ajiya Crowther, a formal slave of Yoruba origin.

It was some of Ajayi Crowther’s followers that came to the village square to do crusade and evangelism, they noticed a very beautiful halve dress woman. They took pity on her after enquiring about her, from the villagers, through their interpreter they took and prayed for her. She received healing from spirit of madness and she was set free from the spirit husband. Ugoma was among the first convert from her village. She became a missionary herself. All her three children were trained by the missionaries to become men of God. Ugomma lived a fulfilled life.