INTRODUCTION

In a world that often seemed determined to break her, she stood—bruised, not broken. From the very beginning, life handed her more battles than blessings. She was just a girl, born into the chaos of a fractured home, where love was a language rarely spoken and silence echoed louder than words. Her days were shadowed by poverty, her nights by unanswered prayers. Family trauma carved deep scars into her heart, and the pain of watching her parents drift apart left her with questions no child should ever have to ask. Yet, through every storm, every setback, every moment of despair, she carried something the world could not see—hope. Even when life closed doors and shattered dreams, she refused to let her spirit die. And just when the weight became too much to bear, when darkness seemed to have the final word, God stepped in. Not with fireworks or thunder, but with quiet strength, healing, and grace. This is the story of her journey—from brokenness to breakthrough. A story not just of survival, but of redemption. A reminder that even in the darkest chapters, light finds a way in. And that in the end, God always comes through.Not just any story," its my life story"

OBIDA JOY ENE

Chapter One: The Birth of Hope

The sun rose gently over Karmo, a quiet community nestled in the heart of FCT Abuja, on a humid day in 2003. The world, still rubbing the sleep from its eyes, had no idea that something extraordinary was about to happen—a baby girl, small yet strong, was about to draw her first breath.

She arrived just as the sky blushed with morning light, her cries breaking through the stillness like a promise. Born the second daughter to a mother who had already weathered many storms, and a younger sister to a wide-eyed, curious three-year-old brother who didn't yet understand the gravity of change, she entered a home heavy with contrast—dreams on one side, indifference on the other.

Her mother, a native of Edumoga, from the Ingle District of Okpokwu Local Government Area in Benue State, received her newborn with trembling hands but fierce eyes. She had named her in her heart long before she arrived—not just with a name of beauty, but one of purpose. This child, she believed, was a sign. A second chance. A new flame.

This was a woman carved by hardship but clothed in determination. She saw the future like a battlefield and knew the cost of entering it unarmed. Planning wasn't a choice for her—it was survival. She had mapped out dreams as one sketches

blueprints for a house yet to be built. In her eyes, this daughter would walk where she had crawled, run where she had stumbled.

But beside her stood a man—her husband—whose mind was clouded by apathy. He was her opposite in every way: where she prepared, he procrastinated; where she feared the consequences of failure, he shrugged them off. He wore fatherhood like a borrowed coat—present, but not fitting. He had no vision for the storms ahead, nor the wisdom to steer his family through them.

Still, into this tension, this clashing of hopes and disappointments, the little girl was born. A native of strength. A child of both love and longing. Her first breath was not just air—it was prophecy. Though her cradle sat in a modest home shadowed by uncertainty, she was already marked by something greater.

She did not yet know the weight of her mother's silent prayers, the ache of her father's absence, or the fire she would walk through in the years to come. But even on that first day, in that small corner of Karmo, something within her spirit stirred—something the world could not yet see.

She was born not into perfection, but into purpose.

Chapter Two: The Quiet Storms

The early years passed like whispers—soft, almost forgettable, yet heavy with meaning. From the outside, everything seemed ordinary. The little girl, now learning to sit, to walk, to laugh, grew with an innocence that belied the tension around her. She would giggle at shadows on the wall and clap at the chirping of birds. But beneath that innocence, a quiet storm was brewing.

Her mother was her sun. Tireless, radiant, and always moving. She rose before the first cockcrow, juggling tasks with the grace of someone who knew that no one was coming to rescue her. Her hands, always busy—cooking, cleaning, sewing, praying—were also soft when they touched her children, always anchoring them to safety. She dreamed of a better life for her daughter, one where she would not be defined by struggle, but by strength.

Her father, however, was present only in name. He drifted through their lives like a distant echo—heard, but rarely felt. His eyes often stared into nothing, his thoughts far from the family he was meant to lead. There were days he wouldn't return home, and when he did, it was usually with empty pockets and tired excuses. The warmth a child should feel from a father's embrace was replaced by silence, absence, and the occasional outburst of frustration.

The girl began to notice things—not all at once, but in fragments. The tightness in her mother's smile. The arguments whispered late

at night. The way her mother's eyes lingered a little longer at the market stalls, calculating what they could afford and what must wait. Her brother, now in school, began to ask questions she couldn't answer. Questions about why their father no longer played with them. Why Mommy cried sometimes when she thought no one could see.

Even at a young age, the girl developed an awareness beyond her years. She learned to read moods, to sense danger before it came. She knew when to hide, when to be quiet, when to hold her mother's hand just a little tighter. Her world, though small, was already teaching her how to survive.

School started late for her. The fees were a mountain her mother climbed with scraped knees. But when the day finally came, she walked into the classroom with a mixture of fear and fire. She didn't have the newest books or the neatest uniforms, but she had something more powerful—a determination that burned quietly within her, passed down like an inheritance from her mother.

Every letter she learned, every word she wrote, became a brick in the foundation of her escape. She began to dream, though not of castles or fairy tales, but of peace. Stability. A home where laughter didn't feel like a stranger. She didn't just want to succeed—she needed to. For herself. For her mother. For the little girl who was once born into chaos but refused to stay broken by it.

What no one around her saw yet was that this girl, born in a dusty corner of Abuja, carried within her the seeds of a story only God could write. And the pen had just begun to move.

Chapter Three: Beauty Amidst the Ashes

In the midst of hardship, God still planted beauty.

On the 4th of July, in the late 2000s, a new light entered their world. Her name was Gloria, and she truly was what her name meant—a radiant glory wrapped in the tiny form of a newborn. From the moment she opened her eyes, there was something different about her. She smiled early, laughed often, and somehow carried a warmth that seemed to calm even the loudest chaos around her.

She was a cheerful child, always quick to hug, quick to love, as if God had sent her to be a breath of fresh air for a mother whose lungs were full of sorrow. Even though the house was still filled with tension and uncertainty, Gloria was a reminder that joy could still grow in barren places. She didn't know about the weight her mother carried, or the silent tears cried at night, but her innocence became a kind of healing in itself.

But life was not done testing her mother.

In 2009, another child arrived—a baby boy. Samuel. A name full of promise. A name that meant "God has heard." For a brief moment, it felt like hope had returned. The family looked at him and saw the beginning of something new, a chapter where healing could finally start to write over the pain.

But it was not to be.

Before he could walk, before he could even say the names of his siblings, Samuel was gone. Like a candle snuffed out before its flame could dance. His death left behind not just silence, but a wound so deep that even time would struggle to close it. The little girl—now older, wiser—didn't fully understand grief, but she understood absence. She looked for her baby brother in the mornings and asked questions no one wanted to answer.

Her mother bore it all—again. Alone. Misunderstood. Grieving. Fighting battles on every front.

As if her pain wasn't enough, the man she called her husband—the one meant to protect her, to stand beside her in loss—turned crueler. His ignorance spoke louder than his love. He accused her of things no faithful woman should ever hear. Accusations of infidelity, whispers of doubt and shame, all rooted in nothing but his own insecurity and limited understanding. In his eyes, a woman searching for work, trying to feed and clothe her children, must surely have other motives. He couldn't comprehend

ambition. He didn't understand sacrifice. He refused to see her truth.

But she was not completely alone.

In the shadows of their darkest days stood a man—a quiet hero—Uncle Samuel, her younger brother. He was not rich in money, but rich in loyalty. Where others judged, he supported. Where others blamed, he defended. Where her husband tore her down, Samuel lifted her up. He was her backbone, her safe place. The one she could run to without shame. Her children saw him not just as an uncle, but as a true father figure—steady, strong, always present.

In a world that seemed determined to crush her, Uncle Samuel was proof that God still placed angels in human skin.

And so the girl—now growing into herself—watched all of this unfold. She watched her mother lose and rise. She watched betrayal and brotherhood walk into their lives side by side. She was learning, with every passing year, that life was not fair—but God was still faithful.

Chapter Four: A Mother's War, A Child's Witness

Life, as I knew it, didn't fall apart all at once—it cracked little by little, right in front of my seven-year-old eyes.

Fights were no longer arguments whispered behind closed doors—they were loud, terrifying, and sometimes violent. I watched my father, a man who should have been our protector, raise his hand against the woman who gave us life. I saw my mother's tears—silent, strong, defeated but never broken.

One day, she ran—to her brother's house—her safe place. My father had warned us not to follow, but I did. I needed to see her. I needed to feel safe too. I was only a child, just seven, yet I understood that love couldn't live in fear. But when I returned home, my act of love was met with brutal punishment. My father beat me mercilessly. I cried—not just from

the pain, but from the fear that this would never end.

It was the last straw.

My mother took him to social welfare. The courts got involved. The marriage finally came to an end, and the court, in its rare wisdom, gave custody to the only one who had ever truly cared for us—my mother.

After that, he disappeared. No calls. No visits. Just absence.

My mother became everything—father, mother, provider, protector. She carried burdens that would have crushed even the strongest of men. With no one to help, she took loans, begged, prayed, and sacrificed to ensure our education never stopped. My brother earned a place at Federal Government College Keffi, shining from JSS1 to SS3, and later

secured admission into University of Abuja with a JAMB score of 270. I attended a private boarding and day school for my junior years, and later, a full-time boarding school in Abuja.

We were disciplined. Intelligent. Resilient.

All thanks to her.

She moulded us like clay in the hands of a master potter, shaping our character with pain, patience, and love. She could have given up—but she didn't. Instead, she fought for our future like her life depended on it.

Even when life denied her the chance to chase her dreams—when my father stopped her from continuing her education, even after she had enrolled—she never turned bitter. She turned brave. God, in His faithfulness, eventually rewarded her with a federal government job. A junior staff, yes—but to us, she was already a general.

We didn't have much, but we had her. And that was enough.

From 2010 to 2017, we lived through storms that could've destroyed us. But my mother became our umbrella, our shield, our safe place. I often tell myself: "If love had a face, it would look like her."

I would give my life for this woman.

Her strength is something to be adored, not just admired. I still pray for the day I'll be able to give her the life she truly deserves. To wipe away every tear she once hid behind a smile. She is my hero, my heart, my reason for becoming who I am today.

This part of my story isn't just about pain—it's about survival. It's about a woman who stood when everything told her to fall. And it's about the

children she raised, who are now rising because she never gave up.

Chapter Five: A House Made of Hope

We thought we had seen hardship, but life had more in store.

After years of sacrifice, hustling, and silent tears, my mother did something miraculous—she bought a piece of land. In Nasarawa State, with the little she had and a loan she prayed she could one day repay, she began to build. Not a mansion. Not even a finished house. But a home. One made of sweat, courage, and prayers whispered into the night.

It was just two rooms. No ceiling. Cement bags were our covering against the heat by day and the cold by night. The floor was bare—a mixture of sand and cement that turned our legs white with dust. There was no toilet, just

the bush behind the house, and every trip was a quiet reminder of what we still lacked.

But in all of that—we were happy.

It was ours. Our tiny corner of peace in a world that had only ever handed us pain. For the first time, we weren't paying rent. We weren't under someone else's roof, listening to insults for being poor. We had something we could call home—not perfect, but perfect enough for us.

We laughed in those dusty rooms. We shared secrets and ate meals on the floor. My mom smiled more. We knew we were still poor, still struggling—but we also knew we were safe. Safe in her love. Safe in the little she had built with her own hands.

Then, just when the dust had started to settle, he came back.

My father.

After years of silence, after years of absence—he returned, apologizing. With words that tasted like old regret and a face we barely recognized anymore. And my mother, with the softest heart I've ever known, said yes.

I didn't understand it. Maybe I still don't.

Maybe it's a woman's heart—too crystal, too pure, too forgiving.

She let him in. She let him sleep under the roof she built. Eat from the pot she had kept full when he was gone. And we watched, silently, as the man who had once walked away now tried to settle into a home he did not build.

But something had changed.

He wasn't the same. We weren't the same.

The love he once crushed no longer lived in our hearts.

It just hung in the air, like an echo of something long gone.

He felt like a stranger to us. A guest in the house of a woman who had once begged for his love. And this time, it was he who felt the cold, not from the night breeze—but from hearts that no longer waited for his return.

We were polite. Respectful. But we didn't care anymore.

Not like we used to. The broken pieces of the past had been swept under the cement floor, but they still cut our feet.

Yet somehow, my mother never stopped being who she was—gentle, hopeful, strong.

She was the reason we survived.

She was the reason we had a home.

She was the reason we had peace, even when life tried to steal it again.

CHAPTER SIX; Title: "Through the Ashes, We Rose"

The red dust of GGSS Dukpa settled on her worn-out sandals as she stepped through the school gate, a fading school bag clutched to her side like a lifeline. At just fifteen, Joy had already known too many forms of hunger—hunger of the belly, hunger for love, hunger for ease, hunger for a future that didn't feel like a mirage.

Gwagwalada's sun was unforgiving, and the outskirts, where Dukpa lay, were quieter than the city's heart—so quiet it sometimes echoed with the whispers of the dreams students carried on their frail shoulders.

Joy was a boarding student—not by choice, but by life's insistence. Her first term, she thought she might die. Not from illness, but from the silent war of an empty stomach rumbling late into the night. Provisions were a luxury she couldn't afford. While others opened boxes full of biscuits, Milo, sardines, and milk, Joy folded her arms across her stomach and laughed along with her classmates, so they wouldn't ask why she never opened her own. She became an expert in masking pain.

There were nights the cold concrete floor bore witness to her silent tears. No blanket, no comfort—just whispered prayers and the sound of her own sobs muffled in a pillow.

Still, she endured.

Her mother, a warrior in wrappers and dusty feet, would visit when she could, clutching a worn nylon bag with precious offerings: a few cups of garri, a small packet of sugar, maybe groundnut if luck smiled. No fancy things. Just survival. Soap was begged from roommates, cream passed hand to hand in tiny recycled containers. Even meals were often borrowed—"Abeg, make I collect small," became a chorus she had to sing more than once.

Her mother was drowning in debts, paying school fees with borrowed money and feeding the family with the grit of a woman who knew that giving up was not an option. Her elder brother, Emmanuel, was in the university, hustling with torn shoes and torn hope, barely managing to stay afloat. Yet they all pressed on, like stubborn weeds growing through cracks in concrete.

Gloria, younger sis, faced her own battles. Often sent home because of unpaid fees, returning thin and tired but never defeated. They shared everything—pain, dreams, even the last scoop of garri when hunger felt like death.

And mr Sunday , their father, worked as a security guard far from home. He rarely visited, buried in long hours and sleepless nights. His silence was heavy, but his efforts whispered through every bag of rice he sent once in a blue moon.

Joy never topped her class just by chance. She was brilliant—sharp like lightning and persistent like rain. Teachers noticed her. But brilliance couldn't fill a stomach or pay for sanitary pads or shoes. Still, she held on, believing that life owed her more, and one day, she would collect it.

Through three long years, she laughed with classmates by day and cried into her bed by night. She never gave up.

And somehow—by grace, by grit, by prayers whispered into the heavens—they made it. She made it. Graduation came, not with glamour but with glory.

It was not easy. It was never easy. But Joy walked out of GGSS Dukpa with her head held high and eyes shining with the hope of better days. She carried her pain like a medal and her memories like armor.

They say miracles don't come wrapped in gold. Sometimes, they come in the shape of a girl who survived hunger, heartbreak, and hardship—and still dares to dream.

In November 2020, the harmattan winds blew gently through the narrow streets of her hometown, stirring dust and memories alike.

Joy stepped off the rickety bus, three years older, her frame lean but strong, shaped by time and trials at the boarding school. She was just a young woman, barely out of her teens, yet her eyes held the weight of someone who had already stared life in the face—and chose to fight back.

The streets hadn't changed much, but the faces had. Her old homies met her with open arms and empty stomachs—hunger in their eyes, and no help in sight. The same stories echoed: dropped dreams, stuck ambitions, the world moving fast but leaving them behind. Joy listened, heart heavy, but she wasn't there to pity or be pitied.

By January 2021, she'd made a choice many her age wouldn't dare—she became a class teacher at a small local school. Her class: Basic 3 and 4. Her pay: just 8,000 naira a month. But for Joy, it was never about the money. It was about starting somewhere. She showed up every day before the sun climbed the sky, chalk dust on her fingers and purpose in her stride. Her voice echoed through cracked classroom walls, steady and sure, a rhythm of hope for the little eyes staring up at her.

While others her age chased validation on social media, wrapped themselves in peer pressure like glittering chains, or hunted for the soft life through the arms of men, Joy was carving out something deeper. She didn't care for a boyfriend, for the empty promises of romance. Not because she was heartless, but because she was hungry—for more, for meaning. She wanted something different,

something lasting. She knew a man couldn't define her worth—not now, not ever.

With the quiet resilience of the African woman she was born to be, Joy began from scratch. No shortcuts. Just grit, grace, and a fire that refused to die. She bent, but never broke. She taught, she learned, she grew. Even when life whispered doubt in her ear, she stood tall—because she saw beyond the struggle, into a future worth building.

" CHAPTER SEVEN: My Name is Joy"

My name is Joy, and I have lived up to it—even when life tried its best to make me forget.

After completing secondary school, I found myself teaching in three different schools scattered across Auta Balefi, in Karu, Nasarawa State. The pay was low, barely enough to get by, but I held on, grateful for the little I earned. Still, deep inside me, I knew I wanted more. I had dreams, visions bigger than the chalkboard and classrooms I stood in.

When the weight of surviving on peanuts became too heavy, I made a bold decision: I would learn a skill. Something with my hands. Something that could bring beauty to the world and dignity to my life. I chose fashion design.

Every morning, I rose early and walked to the shop where I was learning. I was determined to be the best. I watched every movement of the needle, every cut of the fabric. Slowly, I started mastering the machine and the designs. By Christmas 2022, I had sewn beautiful dresses for my two younger sisters and myself. The look on their faces, the joy of seeing them wear something I made—it gave me a sense of pride I had never felt before.

My zeal didn't go unnoticed. Within a short time, I became the senior apprentice in the shop. But as the title came, so did the struggle. My boss began assigning tasks to test my growth—design this, cut that—but how could I sew when I didn't have money for fabric? I had the skill, but no means.

At best, I completed one dress in two weeks—when my mother could afford to buy wrappers from Nyanya market. Most days, I went to the shop hungry. Sometimes, I was so weak I felt dizzy. I'd quietly pack up and go home.

Church became another burden. No shoes to wear, no decent clothes. Soon, people stopped asking why I no longer came. They called us backsliders, not knowing the real reasons. Not knowing the pain behind the silence.

Then, one early morning in November 2022, my mother woke me up gently and said:

'Joy, dress up. Let's go to see an agent. You'll work as a house help in Abuja. We'll get some money so you can write JAMB next year. Don't worry, my daughter. I'll go with you. I'll make sure you end up in good hands."

We went.

The agent was kind, and the interview went well. A few days later, I found myself in a house in Abuja, working as a nanny for two little children—aged two and four. They were playful, full of energy, and somehow, they made me smile. But I was more than just a nanny. I was also the cleaner, the housekeeper, the cook, the one who went to the market.

It was tiring. But there was something different here: hope.

At the end of each month, I sent money home. My younger sisters could eat. My mom could breathe a little. I even bought a few things for myself. Not much, but

enough to remind me that I hadn't given up. That I was still fighting.

Some nights, I'd lie on my bed exhausted, staring at the ceiling, dreaming—not of riches, but of a future where I could return to my sewing machine, create beauty, and rewrite my story.

Because this is just the beginning.

My name is Joy. And my story has just begun.