

Becoming Two (A short story)

I saw Anna again after 15 years. I saw her but she wasn't the little infant whose image has been on my mind for eons. She wasn't the 2-days old baby I left to die at the refuse dump.

Anna was representing her school for the quarterly spelling bee competition and so far, she's been scaling each phase without burning out her memory. She kept spelling till she got to the nationals where I happened to be one of the judges.

I've been hearing a lot about this nerd who has been setting the whole central east on fire with her brains and I wasn't surprised when I learnt she would be at the competition. Her school is head bent on milking all the awards through her. She's their best student.

'Anna Patrick for Greenfield High School,' The chief judge called her.

She walked up to the stage and took her seat. She is my replica and I hid part of my face with my wig trying my best to comfort myself.

I met her two days ago when they arrived. She was in the company of a woman and a man, supposedly her foster parents and also the school proprietress. I met them at the entrance to the secretariat where every student would have to register. She had the mark on her face, on her neck and her right hand.

I had a baby when I was 15. I wasn't ready and so was my boyfriend. It was best I got rid of it but I couldn't for fear of losing my life in the process so I ran away from home. I had the baby, a little healthy baby in a cold dirty infirmary. She was so small and beautiful and I forgot my fears for once as I looked at her. My baby had those birthmarks, tiny starish marks close to her eyes, her neck and on the right hand.

I know I couldn't take care of her so I opted for the easy way out. I rolled her in folds of wrappers and dumped her in her sleep at the refuse dump close to the area and I turned back and fled.

Anna wrote down her name and I stared at her in shock, the room suddenly became so small for me and stuffy too. I couldn't breathe and sweat broke out on my tiny frame. My colleague asked her for other information which she provided in that shrill voice the same as mine. She has my eyes and lips too. Anyone who looked at us closely would see the resemblance, I nearly fainted as she talked. I was just holding on to sanity by a thread.

She left with her parents and I walked back to my room complaining of a headache. My mind was cast back on that day when I dropped my motherly cloak and abandoned a child I brought into his world. Now fate has played a fast one on me by showing me how wicked I was and a treasure that I've lost to another family. I cried myself to sleep filled with guilt and sorrow.

I've not even been able to conceive in my marriage after 5 years already.

She was at the last two words that would crown her champion, she and another girl from the west were the only two remaining after defeating the other thirty-four contestants from other states.

By missing a letter, the other girl fell out and it was remaining just Anna. My own Anna. I looked at the last word for her to spell.

'Eccendentesiast'

The chief judge said something else rather.

'Spell Motherhood'

She looked at him with awe as her jaw dropped from high expectations. No one was expecting such a simple word to spell. I could see the sly look on the face of the proprietress and the triumphant look on the face of her parents, scratch that, her foster parents. I flinched in lethal dread. This shouldn't be happening now.

I was filled with sorrow as she asked for a dictionary definition. It's such a simple word, why would she want a definition? Abiding by the rule, the chief judge said the definition. I was sitting there trying hard not to make my tears spill because it reminded me of how much I've failed. She brought the microphone close to her mouth and started.

I was told that I had a mother who gave birth to me but decided to throw me away for reasons best known to her-

Anna wasn't supposed to be doing this but I saw that the chief judge was quiet and didn't try to stop her. I guess everyone wants to know about this brilliant girl and who she was.

'I'm not angry at her actions, I'm just sad that she hates me so much that she wants to end my life. I have a mother today, who picked me up from that dump and it's to her I dedicate this'

She walked down the stage to where her parents sat, her mum was already in tears as she came closer. There My Anna spelt the word 'Motherhood'.

I wiped off my tears quickly as they ran down my cheeks. No one would ever see it and I managed to speak into the microphone.

'Correct'

I watched the crowd grow wild in ecstasy as they clapped for the new champion. Her parents hugged her tightly, crying. I slipped away into the restroom and sat on the cold tiled floor. I let go of reasoning as I sat close to the toilet bowl crying in heart-shattering pain.

I couldn't believe what I'd done to myself. I was so weak to even go back to the hall. How would I tell the story? She will hate me even more, that I walked away from her only to resurface on the day she won the national spelling bee to say I was her mother. What kind of mother would do what I did to an innocent child? She would never believe me but I am truly sorry for what I did. I managed to gather myself together, washed my face but my eyes were swollen already. I walked back to the hall in the very picture of despair.

They were already back on stage, Anna and her school proprietress. I collected the award from the chief judge and the plaque showing the prize money of a million naira. My walk to the stage took forever as memories replayed themselves in my mind: how I laid underneath her father as he planted his seed inside me, the day I discovered I was pregnant, my talk with her father who asked me to get rid of her, my lonely life afterwards as a pregnant teenager, the labour pains, her cries after she was delivered, the needle-like pains on my breast she suckled for life and finally, the day I let her go.

I wish I could just run away from those thoughts but how can I run away from the things that run through my mind, the faster I run, the faster they run through me.

I was awash with emotions as I presented her the award and the plaque. The crowd went wild with joy, her parents ran up the stage to carry her covering her face with kisses.

I had to step back for the more people who came to congratulate her.

I, her mother had to step back for others to celebrate my child and I couldn't join in.

#Becoming_two

Afterwards, you'll regret the very action you took. Please raise that child or give the child to the orphanage. Please, don't abandon them somewhere to die, some of them don't die, some of them will come back to haunt you to tremors and of course in good spirits.

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