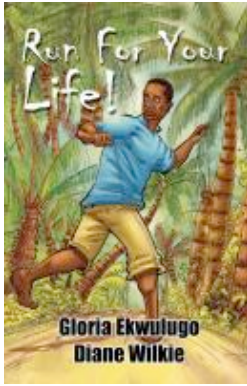


Run For Your Life!

A colorful illustration of a man with dark skin running through a dense jungle. He is wearing a light blue short-sleeved shirt and khaki shorts. He has a determined and slightly fearful expression, looking back over his shoulder. His arms are outstretched for balance as he runs. The jungle is filled with tall palm trees, other tropical plants, and a path that leads into the distance. The background is a mix of green and brown tones, suggesting a lush but potentially dangerous environment.

Gloria Ekwulugo
Diane Wilkie



This is the unforgettable story of the ongoing tug of war between good and evil, and Obi's journey from brokenness to destiny. Facing death, the question becomes - is it too late for Obi? Will he win or lose the battle? This thriller mystery novel will have you on the edge of your seat, taking you on an exciting journey, full of intrigue and suspense and keeping you engaged and enthralled until the very last page.

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ISBN 978-1-62141-845-0

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Bradenton, Florida.

Copies of this book are printed in the United States of America and in the United Kingdom on acid-free paper.

This novel is based on a true story. However to protect the identity and privacy of the people involved, names and places have been changed.

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2012

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Runforyrlife.wordpress.com

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

A Novel

BY

GLORIA EKWULUGO

AND

DIANE WILKIE

DEDICATION

We dedicate this book to our hero king Jesus. You have always been in our corner Lord. When all else has failed you have proven to be the rock that really does stand the test of time. We can never thank you enough for all the love and encouragement that you continue to give us throughout our lives. Jesus we love you forever.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With special thanks to God, who has always been with us and loved us unreservedly. We want to thank him for all his help, his awesome plan for every single life, and the privilege of being able to tell this remarkable story.

We thank all our families and friends for their patience, love and support. Nigel and Rob, thank you for your invaluable input.

We also want to thank you the reader for taking the time to read this book. We hope that it will thrill, and excite you surpassing all of your expectations.

Proverbs chapter 14 verse 12

There is a way that seems right to a man but its end is the way of death.

Daniel chapter 2 verse 21

He changes times and seasons.

CONTENTS

1. LIFE FALLS APART	1
2. HOPE AT LAST IN THE BIG CITY	5
3. RISING TO THE TOP	23
4. A RUDE AWAKENING	35
5. A NARROW ESCAPE	69
EPILOGUE	99
READER'S STUDY GUIDE	101
MEDITATIONS AND ANSWERS BASED ON THE WORD OF GOD	107
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	115

1. LIFE FALLS APART

It was early morning and the cock crowed to announce to the world that it was time to awake. The village soon came alive with the sounds of an African forest waking up, as the sun began to peep through the clouds. The day made unspoken promises that it would be better than the one before. However it never quite managed it. The promises were usually empty, and a better day only ever proved to be as evasive as a mirage.

Obi was born in this remote village which was east of the Niger. His father Chima was a poverty stricken simple farmer, who spent most of his life struggling to provide for his family.

Life was exceptionally tough because Chima had three wives and fourteen children as well as himself to feed. Each wife had her own hut where she and her children lived, and depending on his mood, he flitted from one hut to the other. As hard as he worked, and as tired as he got, he always had time and energy for his women. They were his one enjoyment in life and the reward he felt he deserved, for working so terribly hard to continuously try and make ends meet.

Time flew quickly and the intense and suffocating heat of the afternoon had disappeared abruptly, as the sun had gone down for the day. In its place was a gentle breeze that played teasingly with the leaves of the trees in the compound. Even the chickens headed back to their pen.

Obi sat on a mat spread out on the ground in front of his mothers hut, watching the wonder of nature prepare for the

night ahead. His thoughts however were miles away as he indulged himself, day dreaming about another life somewhere else. For such a little boy, he was fed up with the hardship of life. Instinctively he knew there had to be more to life than this. His little heart ached for a better day. He longed for the day he would have enough food to eat, nice clothes to wear, and a chance to play with his friends. As he pondered these things he watched the lizards playing and chasing one another.

The rainy season was cruelly delayed and things went from bad to worse. Chima's farm failed miserably, and was therefore unable to produce the crop he had hoped for. As a result there was hardly anything to sell at the market and consequently his family suffered. Some nights Obi had to go to bed hungry as there was just nothing left to eat. He learned early that the sooner he went to bed and fell asleep, the less his belly hurt with hunger pangs. Eventually things got so bad that it was painfully obvious that something had to be done to preserve life, which would otherwise ebb away.

In a desperate attempt to divert the inevitable disaster of death by starvation, and ease the terrible burden, an urgent family meeting was called. After careful consideration, Chima proposed an idea that he thought would work. He believed it could turn out to be the perfect solution, and the salvation of them all. After much deliberation it was decided that seven year old Obi should be sent away from the village to the city to work, to bring in some much needed money.

Adaku, Obi's mother felt an unspeakable anguish in the very depths of her soul, but held her tongue. She knew better than to oppose her husband even though she couldn't imagine her baby boy leaving her side. Adaku was well aware that as Chima was the head of the family he had the final word on the subject. Besides it was more than that she reasoned with herself. The truth was that if she objected there would be no family left

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

anyway. This particular hardship was overwhelming and they would surely all starve to death. She had not been able to come up with any other inspired revelation regarding a solution. She had wracked her brain but remained unable to suggest what would be a better course of action. She resorted to literally biting down on her bottom lip in an effort to keep her mouth shut, and her objections to herself. It took everything she had, to focus on stifling the powerful maternal instinct she could feel threatening to engulf her and take over.

Adaku couldn't bear the thought that her fine boy would no longer sit chatting with her in the kitchen, watching her cook. Up until now it had been her job to guard him jealously, and she had always done her best to discourage him from any activities that might hurt him. Now however because of unfavourable circumstances, things were literally being ripped out of her control. She felt as if she was being made redundant, and there was absolutely nothing she could do about it.

According to this master plan Obi would become a servant, 'a house boy' to another family and receive wages. His job would consist of cooking, washing, cleaning, going to market to buy household supplies, and being a general dog's body in any way the family required.

It was agreed that these wages would be kept safely for him by his employers, until he was old enough to handle the money himself. When there was enough of an accumulation, it was hoped that there would be enough to help feed his starving family. This seemed like the ultimate answer to all their problems. Perhaps there would even be enough money to do repairs to the family mud houses. They could build back the walls that had begun to crumble, and fix the many leaks in each thatched roof! It was a miracle that the huts had not collapsed yet!

Gloria Ekwulugo and Diane Wilkie

The relevant enquiries and arrangements were made as soon as possible, even before Obi had time to get used to the idea of having to leave home. He was leaving so much behind, his mother, his siblings, and the village he had never left before! As harsh as life had been for little Obi, at least things at home were familiar. Now he was going out into the big wide world all by himself, and smack bang into the unknown. As he was just a seven year old child he had no say or choice in the matter. Of course there was no question of him not doing as he was told. He didn't have a clue what to expect so he felt scared and very much all alone.

2. HOPE AT LAST IN THE BIG CITY

Obi found himself suddenly plunged into a whole new way of living in the big city of Lagos with the Amadi family. As they showed him around the house he could hardly believe what his eyes were telling him. The house had four large airy rooms, and even had a veranda at the front. Obi was only used to village huts with their mud walls. He had never ever seen (never mind been inside) a proper European style house before. This was an incredible experience for him and he felt excited by all the possibilities.

The family were nice enough but he was very aware early on that he was just a servant. His madam made that plain to him from the very beginning. He envied the children of the household as they were obviously well cared for. They seemed to enjoy all the things he longed for but never had. He had no reason to hope he would ever have the pleasure of such things in the near future. He, on the other hand had chores to do from the moment he woke up till the moment he lay his head on his bed at night. Unfortunately for him, his day began at five in the morning when the first cock crowed.

Chinwe his madam (the lady of the house), was tall and quite intimidating. She had a no nonsense look on her face and quite frankly Obi was scared of her. He decided early on it was probably not a good idea to get on the wrong side of her. He therefore did his best to give her no reason to get upset, even when she was always calling him for one thing or another.

“Obi, have you made the breakfast? Did you fill the fridge with bottled water? Have you swept the yard yet? Don’t forget when you have done that, I need you to prepare the vegetables, for the soup we’ll cook today! You also need to go to the market and buy a small basket of Palm Kernels. Please hurry up, we haven’t got all day,” she would say emphatically. “May be you are used to doing things as slowly as a snail, back in the bush village where you come from. However here in the city we do things quickly. You need to get used to that and make up your mind to do the same, if you want to do well here,” she said sounding quite irritated. She proceeded to busy herself in the kitchen as if to show him how it was done. Obi did not mistake the harsh note in his madam’s voice. He quickly set about doing as he was told.

He certainly worked hard at home in his village, but this serving as a ‘house boy’ business, certainly took some getting used to as it was a whole new level of hard work. Often when Obi went to bed he was so exhausted that he fell asleep straight away. He was very grateful however that he no longer had to go to bed on an empty stomach, and at least now he had clothing and shelter. He would often debate with himself about which life was better, as both had pros and cons. He concluded that, based on his experiences so far, circumstances could have been a lot worse so he ought to be grateful.

After serving the Amadi family for three years things began to look up a bit, just as he turned ten. They liked him and decided that since he had served them faithfully so far, they would give him the opportunity to go to primary school as well as continue to pay him wages. He had no idea how much money there was altogether but he knew it had been slowly accumulating. On top of that now this totally unexpected privilege!

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

Obi could not hide his excitement as he began to believe perhaps his time had finally come! He was the first one in his whole family to get the chance to go to school! “How proud they will be of me,” he thought to himself. For the first time in a long time and certainly since he had left home, Obi actually felt close to being happy. This new ray of hope gave him a much needed boost.

Arrangements were made and in a few weeks Obi’s dream to go to school had become a reality. He loved it and enjoyed the whole new world of education and learning in a proper classroom. However life presented him with a slightly different challenge. Although he was now allowed to go to school Obi was still the servant boy. This meant he had to perform most of his chores in the early hours of the morning, before he even considered getting ready for school. Once he returned from school he had to continue his chores until every last job was done. His madam did not ease up on him or relax her expectations of him. She was quite happy to crack the whip whenever necessary to remind him of his place. Now that she was sending him to school, she certainly was not about to allow him to slacken off. She expected him to work even harder now, out of sheer gratitude.

Obi felt even more tired these days and often wished that he could just come home from school and relax, like an accepted member of the family. Of course he could only dream about such things, which seemed impossible and completely out of his reach.

Although things had improved significantly since he had come to live in the town, Obi felt desperately home sick and he longed for the familiarity of his village. He missed his parents, especially his mother Adaku. He often imagined what she would be doing at certain times. She had always worked long hours on the farm to help to provide for her children. He

pictured her walking home gracefully balancing her basket of yams on her head.

Adaku was a beautiful woman with cocoa brown skin that shone in the sunlight. In her youth she turned the heads of many young men. However her experience of such a hard life had caused age to begin to creep up on her prematurely. Having given birth to so many children, the constant challenge that came with a lack of basic care and too much stress, definitely took its toll.

Obi desperately missed his brothers and sisters, and felt lonely without them. He dreamed of seeing them again very soon. Suddenly his daydreaming was rudely interrupted by the loud voice of his madam.

“What do you think you are doing you lazy boy? Do you think I am feeding you and sending you to school for nothing? Now get going you little fool!” she bellowed.

“Sorry ma, I’m very sorry. I lost track of time,” replied Obi trying to appease her.

“Sorry for yourself,” she replied harshly looking at him as if he was something pathetic.

Obi was so frightened that he could feel his knees knocking together. That night he could hardly sleep as he reflected on the day. He pondered the state of his life in general and the way things were. He really did try to be positive but he couldn’t help feeling as if the wind had been knocked out of him.

“Why is my life always so hard? Will things ever change for me? Will people always treat me as if I’m just something they found on their shoe? I’m tired of this second class, sub human life?” he thought to himself.

He drifted off into a fitful sleep in the early hours of the morning feeling quite sorry for himself. It was becoming increasingly hard for him to just accept the life of a servant with little complaint. He was fed up of things being unfair and the

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

restrictions placed on him by his present circumstances. He knew he was made for greater things than this, and slowly but surely the force of discontentment began to eat away at him.

Life continued in pretty much the same way for the next seven years. Obi had good and bad days. Some days were worse than others. He was now seventeen years old. A combination of good food and hard work had caused Obi to grow tall and fill out. He now had broad strong shoulders and was fast becoming a man as he said goodbye to boyhood.

In all this time he had never had the opportunity to go home to the village to visit his own family. It was coming up to Christmas and he longed more than ever to visit home. He decided to ask for permission to visit his people. He waited till he thought his madam was in a good mood and attempted to pick the right moment to make his appeal.

“Madam, I miss my family so much as it has been years since I have seen them. Could I please go home to my village for Christmas during the holiday break?” he asked hardly daring to breathe as he waited for the answer. His madam’s good mood quickly faded, as she began to frown.

“Either you obey us and stay, or disobey us and go and don’t come back,” his madam replied abruptly sounding irritated. The expression on her face seemed to mirror the fact that she couldn’t believe his audacity and the cheek of his request. She was most unimpressed and did nothing to hide what she thought and felt about it all. Obi seriously regretted asking for any leave, even though he had never done so before. He wondered how this would affect her treatment of him now.

He found himself in quite a dilemma. “What on earth am I supposed to do when everything in me aches for home?” he asked himself helplessly. After much agonising he finally made a life changing decision and came up with a plan.

“I will go back to my village because I just have to spend Christmas at home with my own people! In the meantime however I’ll pretend that I’m happy to be obedient and stay here serving them over the holidays. I have to get some money together somehow. That might be tricky considering I don’t even usually see my wages. Once upon a time when he was a child, he was just so grateful for the opportunity to work for wages. Now he considered himself to be a man he wished he could have gotten his hands on the money. “I’m just going to have to steal small things from the house and sell them. After all what choice have I got?” he concluded.

Driven by his new found mission and project, Obi did this for a while and couldn’t believe how easy it was. It helped that the family trusted him and were therefore not on their guard. He soon found himself becoming daring and courageous, as he graduated to stealing and selling bigger things for more money and soon became an expert.

He learned how to use a hose pipe to draw petrol out of the many cars he came into contact with in his employer’s compound. They always had visitors and as there was no reason to be suspicious of him, he usually had a clear run to do what needed to be done while they busied themselves chatting. He then collaborated with his friend Emeka who lived down the road. Emeka sold the stolen items for him as they had an agreement and split the profit between them, and this became a nice little earner.

Since his employer’s family owned many expensive clothes, he helped himself to their stuff. He sold some, and kept some back to distribute to his own family as gifts for when he finally went home. He took anything he could get his hands on, until he had made enough money to make the journey home.

Then on the 23rd of December, Obi broke the news to his employers. “I have given it a lot of thought and decided that I

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

want to go home. By the way you should know I am going today!” he declared as bold as brass. They were completely stunned by the sudden announcement, and the abruptness of his decision as they did not see it coming. They were also very disappointed, but not out of love for him. It was simply because he had served them faithfully over the years or so they thought. They had not had to worry about the house keeping while he was around doing the many chores. Unfortunately for them they had become completely dependant on him. Now today with these new developments all that would change.

“Alright if that is how you feel we can’t stop you from going. We will give you some money to settle things with you before you go,” they concluded.

True to their word they gave him a lump sum of money for his wages, that had accumulated over the many years he had worked for them. He used some of it to buy a few things to take home, and he put aside the rest to start a business of his own. He had great plans and a passionate desire to succeed in life. He was determined never to struggle in the way his father had just to make ends meet. He was fired up with ambition as he had no plans to spend even a small portion of his life lacking any good thing!

Finally the moment came when Obi decided it was time to make his move and go home. He packed all his belongings and made his way to the busy motor park where he would board the lorry.

He paid his fare to the lorry driver and was allowed to get on and find a comfortable spot. He had a good feeling about this journey, as almost immediately he was blessed enough to find a solitary seat hidden at the back of the lorry. He was so pleased about this because it meant he could lean back and relax against the bundles of dried fish making their way to the market. He had worn himself out with all the planning and preparation.

Adrenalin flowed as he anticipated going home. He had to make a conscious effort to try to calm himself down.

He decided to rest on the journey, so that when he finally arrived back in his village he would be completely refreshed. Besides he had a lot of thinking to do, and he wanted to be able to do so in peace, without having to make polite conversation. The other advantage of sitting at the back is that he would receive a supply of fresh air as he was very close to the side openings of the lorry. During the journey he did not need the challenge of breathing in the stink of stale air!

The lorry driver took ages haggling and negotiating a satisfactory price, and finally settling with all his other customers. Eventually after much fussing they were ready to go. Obi tried to relax but found it difficult because he felt so excited to be on his way home at long last! It felt like he had waited for this moment literally for years, and he had rehearsed it over and over again in his mind.

It was soon time for the lorry to pull out of the motor park, and Obi sighed a deep sigh of relief to be on his way. The overloaded lorry struggled and groaned pathetically as it tried to move with all the weight it was carrying. The lorry driver being a business man, had refused to start the journey until every corner of the lorry was packed full. He cared little that his lorry resembled a tin packed full of sardines! It shook dangerously from side to side like a huge angry volcano, about to lose its balance and be overturned on to its side at any minute. After making loud noises that sounded like a sniper shot gun, and literally frightening innocent people as they passed by, the lorry coughed out a considerable amount of dark smoke. Moving unsurely at first the lorry slowly gained momentum, and then suddenly gathered speed as eventually they drove on to the main road. Before long, food selling market stalls and houses sped by. As the lorry gained confidence, it focused on covering

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

as much ground as possible in daylight in order to reach its destination before darkness fell.

Obi travelled all day arriving home at his village late that evening. After dismounting the lorry he hired a taxi to drive him to his family's compound. The night was as dark as the air was still, with stars peeping shyly from behind the thick clouds. As the taxi driver pulled into his compound, Obi marvelled at how different everything looked and seemed. He felt completely choked with mixed emotions as he beheld his beloved mother's mud hut. It had always been a symbol of security for him as a young child. Now it looked so much smaller than he remembered, and more battered than ever. Part of the thatched roof was no longer even in place. He paid the taxi driver who then drove off into the night leaving him alone with his thoughts.

Eventually he took a deep breathe to try steady his nerves, calm his emotions and the thumping of his heart. At first he seemed rooted to the spot and had to give himself a pep talk.

"It's now or never he thought to himself," as he tried to summon all his courage.

"Papa, mama, where are you? It's me, I'm home," he called eagerly but no one replied. He called even louder as he knocked frantically on the bamboo door before him.

After what seemed like forever eventually a frail looking old woman opened the door as she rubbed her eyes trying to wake up. Obi had to catch his breath at the sight of her. He felt completely winded as he tried to believe what his eyes were telling him. There were several teenagers lying on wooden beds and sleeping mats directly behind her. They woke up, and began to stretch themselves. One of them lit a paraffin lamp so they could see properly what all the fuss was about and who was at the door, at this time of the night.

“Mama, its me your son,” he said hot tears running down his cheeks at the sight of his beloved mother who had aged tremendously. It had been such a long time and he could hardly take it all in. At first she just stared blankly at him.

“Mama its me, where is Papa?” he asked trying to snap her out of the trance she seemed to be in.

As the moon shone down in all its glory on the little mud hut, suddenly the penny seemed to drop. The woman stumbled slightly and started to cry. Incredulously she suddenly realised that this was her beloved son whom she thought was dead. She had long given up hope of ever seeing him again. Since the day he had gone off to live with the family in the big city, no one had seen or heard from him and there had been no communication. To be able to cope with the magnitude of the loss they felt, the family had written him off as dead. They had come to believe that the big city had swallowed him up whole. To make matters worse the big city was very much the unknown to these humble villagers. No one had any money to send out a search party to try and find him, nor would they have known where to begin. There was no opportunity to investigate and ascertain exactly what had happened to him. As the years went by everyone was just left in limbo and there had been no closure for the family concerning the young man. He had left the village as the promise of hope for the family but ended up as just another painful unanswered question.

When Adaku recovered from the obvious shock, she flung her frail body on her son wrapping her thin arms tightly round his neck, as if she was never going to let him go again. Overcome with emotion he cuddled her tightly in his arms and they held each other for quite a while. It took a long time before Obi managed to find his voice. When he had composed himself enough he asked again, “Mama, where is my father? Why has

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

he not come to greet me?” He asked with a puzzled look on his face.

“My son it is with a broken heart that I have to tell you this. Your father is no longer in the land of the living. He died two years ago after a powerful white man’s illness called ‘influenza’ claimed him as its prey,” she replied as delicately as she could. She ached to see the pain etched across his face as he tried to take in and handle the news.

Obi was suddenly overcome. He shook his head in disbelief before burying it in his mother’s lap. He was caught totally unawares and bewildered by the news. This was of course the last thing he was expecting. He wept like a baby as his mother held him close to her heart.

“How could Papa be dead? How could he do this to us? How dare he die when he fathered so many children? Who was he expecting to take responsibility for bringing all of them up?” he thought angrily to himself as resentment built up.

“When will this suffering end? God are you not the one that created me? Why God, why? Whoever you are tell me why you are doing this to me,” he lamented shaking his fist up at the air.

This most certainly was not how he imagined his home coming. His mind raced as a million different thoughts tormented him. He felt so very sorry for himself. The night was so long that Obi wasn’t sure it would ever end.

Eventually morning arrived as the sun peeped through the clouds, and the cocks crowed as usual. There was great excitement in the yard as the news got around, that their long lost son and brother had returned home after so many years.

Obi spend time drinking in his surroundings and the sight of everything that he had once called home, soothed the dull ache in his soul. He chewed on his chewing stick and then brushed his teeth as he absently gazed out of the windows. He noted the palm trees that his father used to tap for palm wine

were still there. He loved the sight of the red mud compound walls and the bamboo mats that they all sat on. It was all so precious to him as when he was away, he had spent endless nights wondering if he would ever see it all again.

He distributed the gifts he had brought back home with him, to his mum, brothers and sisters and extended family members. There was much noisy rejoicing as excitement spread like wildfire. For people who spent most of their days wondering where on earth the next meal was going to come from, this was truly a miraculous time for all involved! Obi smiled sadly to himself as he acknowledged that at least he had been able to put a smile on their faces although his own heart was breaking.

It was misty and damp as a fine rain was being blown through the huge trees that majestically dominated the busy compound. The wind was fairly powerful and therefore blew the leaves, twigs, and bits of rubbish round and round making quite a mess.

As Obi adjusted and got used to being back home he spent days fighting depression and thinking seriously about the future.

"I wonder what's next? What can I do in this remote village when I've gotten used to living in the big city? What am I going to do to survive?" he asked himself as he watched the rain fall. The weather seemed to accurately reflect his mood.

He shared his concerns with his mum. She responded by reminding him of his responsibilities. This further added to the burden he already felt.

"Obi as the first born son of this family, it is now your job to take care of the rest of the family. You will have to find something quickly to enable you to do this well," she said emphatically.

After that discussion, he gave it even more serious thought as he began to feel the pressure of his responsibilities. He

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

thought he had better start the way he was going to go on. He decided to use the money he had left to repair a leaky roof in the old shanty mud house. He also felt it necessary to add on an extra room for himself. As he was pondering these things, he had an idea.

“What if I moved to the nearest town? That way I could get a job, work really hard and make enough money to support my whole family and still have enough to live a good life!” I could have the best of both worlds,” he said at last feeling hopeful and encouraging himself.

Two weeks later Obi found himself in the nearby market town of Aba. A very enthusiastic voluptuous woman selling food was desperately trying to drum up customers. “Come everyone don’t waste anymore time. When you taste my stew, you’ll lick your fingers and come back for seconds! I’ve made it tasty with onions, palm oil, garlic and ripe tomatoes. Buy it from me before its all gone,” she enthused. Obi stared at the brownish red meat stew with bright green leafy vegetables in it, and his mouth started to water. He suddenly remembered he was hungry as his belly rumbled, and he inhaled the scrumptious aroma. With his new acquired money he was able to buy himself something to eat.

A sense of adventure and excitement welled up inside him as he wondered what life had to offer him and how soon he could make his fortune. Although Obi was only seventeen years old, the combination of hard work he was accustomed to, and the suffering he had experienced in early childhood made him mature and far older than his years.

As he embraced the full responsibility of having to take care of his family, and trying to find a job, Obi felt very much like now he was a man. He felt comforted that at last he was free to pursue more suitable employment. He was very hopeful that one day he would be able to live a great life. The thought of

this spurred him on to achieve what he had never managed to before.

On a mission he made himself as comfortable as possible and lay down in one corner of the nearby bus stop. This was where he planned to spend the night and resume his search in the morning.

He did not have long to wait, for the following morning as he strolled along the street, he saw an advertisement which got his attention.

‘Cook Wanted’ (Attractive Salary and accommodation available).

“Oh my goodness, yes surely this is for me and just what I am looking for,” he said excitedly to himself as he knocked at the gate.

The lady of the house promptly let him in. After interviewing him she decided she liked what she heard and offered him the job on the spot, snapping him up before anyone else did. She was most impressed with the year’s worth of experience he had acquired cooking in his previous job. He had a hard time stopping himself from jumping up and down in front of her. He could hardly believe how easy it had been. After discussing the terms and conditions they agreed for him to start in a few days time.

Obi soon settled very well into his new job doing it with pride and excellence. He was very adventurous in his cooking and before long gained the love and trust of his new employers. It seemed that things were apparently working out for him at long last. When he received his first salary he immediately sent part of it back home to his mum. He wanted it to be a new chapter for his mum to end all her suffering. He asked her to pray for him and bless him which she happily did. He felt so

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

good in himself and so proud that he was able to provide for his family.

He decided it was now time to take his first step forward in becoming a renowned business man. He registered himself into a driving school and worked exceptionally hard at learning as quickly as possible. After only a few months he acquired his driving licence. Now he felt the sky was literally the limit!

Obi felt overwhelmed with excitement and filled with a great sense of achievement. His employers were very impressed with him and told him that driving would now be included in his terms of employment. As it was now a double post he was contracted to earn twice the amount of money. He could now afford to get himself some nice, smart new clothes to wear. He no longer had to feel ashamed whenever he drove his master, madam, or their children around.

Overnight it seemed as if life had become much more interesting, meaningful and worthwhile. Girls now noticed and shamelessly flirted with him. He enjoyed the attention and harmless attraction as he felt it too. These were certainly uncharted waters, but every aspect of his manhood was being awakened. He had the good sense however to realise that he could not afford to indulge in anything serious for the time being. He was on a mission with a purpose. He kept the vision he had of a village of poverty stricken people, mud houses and backwardness, ever close to his heart. He remembered where he was coming from and where he planned to go, and this kept him going.

“One day, things will change. They must change! I will work hard and build a beautiful mansion in my village. It will be a storied building painted well, and I will invite all the villagers to celebrate with me,” he encouraged himself. He dreamed night and day about his mansion and this helped keep

his mind on the task at hand. He worked and saved harder than ever, because he had a dream, a vision and a goal.

Many years passed by and Obi eventually had enough money saved to leave his job and buy himself a car. He registered it as a taxi because he reasoned that it would be amazing to work for himself and be his own boss and master. He would at last be free to do what he wanted, when and how he wanted to do it. The more he thought about it the more he liked the idea.

His first mission with his new taxi was to visit his mother back in the village. "My mum and younger ones must enjoy my good fortune," he thought to himself. He bought lots of good things, clothes, food and all sorts of provisions including a radio for his beloved mum.

As he approached the village in his taxi car people began to shout, "Look it is a land plane! Get out of the way before it knocks you down! A land plane is coming!" They had never seen any thing as big as that driving along their primitive mud road before.

He drove until he arrived in his compound. Jumping out of the car he shouted for his mother. When everyone recognised who it was they shouted all the louder for joy. Adaku his mother hurried as quickly as her frail body would allow and started to laugh almost hysterically as she hugged her son. "I never dreamt of a day such as this when my son, my first born son would drive to the village with a car," she said proudly as she gazed happily up at her son.

The news travelled quickly that a land plane had arrived in the village. Everyone wanted to see it for themselves. There was much singing, clapping and dancing that day! People brought their music pots and metal gongs. They called Obi's name in their songs because he had brought a new era to their obscure village.

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Adaku was simply overwhelmed by the gifts she received from her hero son Obi. Up until now she had learned to just about survive and cope with the difficulty and harshness of life. She avoided disappointment by never expecting anything good. She had never been given a reason to believe she would live to see any good thing happening to her family. Therefore what was happening to her now was completely surreal. “Now I know there is a God who cares for poor people like me,” she said barely above a whisper as she choked back the tears. She laughed and cried that day and Obi was reminded of how beautiful she once had been.

“Obi my son, its late now, but tomorrow morning we need to have a serious talk,” she said soberly.

“Mama, what’s wrong? Is there a problem?” he asked frowning with concern.

“No son, there’s no problem. We’ll talk tomorrow,” she answered reassuringly.

Obi could tell his mother was pondering something in her heart, but he knew he would have to be patient to find out exactly what was on her mind.

The following morning, Obi awoke early and went to the kitchen to find his mother cooking breakfast.

“Sit down on the stool next to your mum,” she said as she sat herself down on a big stone. “Let me get straight to the point,” she said as she sensed her son’s impatience.

Obi’s heart missed a beat as he noted the seriousness in his mother’s eyes.

“Obi my son, my first born, you have made your mother so proud and happy so thank you for that! However from where I’m sitting you are not complete, you’re only half a man!” she said raising her hands in the air for emphasis.

“Mama what on earth are you talking about?” he asked puzzled.

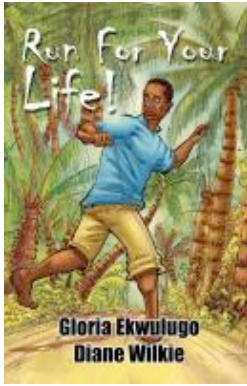
“Perhaps she is ill with Malaria and it has affected her judgement. After all, I now have everything that could possibly qualify me as a man,” he thought to himself.

“Son don’t look so confused. I simply mean that it is time for you to get a wife! You need a wife as it is certainly time now,” she said emphatically.

Obi burst out laughing. “For goodness sake mama, is that all? You had me very worried thinking something was wrong,” he replied feeling enormous relief. Laughing again he said, “No problem mama. When I go back to Aba to continue working and concentrate on business, you can make finding me a wife your new job,” he replied still laughing.

“What’s for breakfast mama?” he asked suddenly feeling hungry.

“I have prepared some roasted Yam and Palm oil for you just the way you used to like it,” she lovingly replied with a twinkle in her eye.



This is the unforgettable story of the ongoing tug of war between good and evil, and Obi's journey from brokenness to destiny. Facing death, the question becomes - is it too late for Obi? Will he win or lose the battle? This thriller mystery novel will have you on the edge of your seat, taking you on an exciting journey, full of intrigue and suspense and keeping you engaged and enthralled until the very last page.

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