

Onígboràn

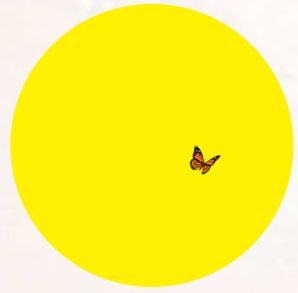
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It was a beautiful, mildly sunny, morning in Epe village, where Damilola lived. It was a Saturday and Damilola wouldn't go to school. Instead, her mother wanted to prepare a special meal for the family.



Damilola was ten years old but her mum trusted her so much and sent her on errands from time to time. All their

neighbours knew about how Damilola brought so much joy to her mother.

That morning, Damilola's mother wanted her to go to the market. Not just any market, but the Epe fish market. The Epe fish market is the biggest fish market in Lagos. Damilola had been to the nearby markets before, but not the Epe fish market. The Epe fish market was some distance away.

Damilola had woken up and was saying her morning

prayers when her mother checked up on her and told her she would be going to the market.



Soon, she was dressed and ready to leave the house. She had on, her favourite pair of trousers, black sandals and a pink t-shirt, along with her purse in which she put the money with which she was to buy the fish. It was five hundred naira.

Before she left the house, she went to the kitchen to tell her mum she was leaving.

"Damilola wait," her mum said. Then, added,

"Make sure you don't forget what I said earlier. Only buy mackerel fish from Aunty Bisi. Do not go to the main market or anywhere else to buy the fish."

Her mum pulled her ears to warn her.

"Yes mummy, I will do just what you've said." Damilola's reply put a smile on her mum's face, as she left the house, holding her purse and a bag.

On her way to the market, Damilola sang her favourite song. She wanted to enjoy the morning air. She always joined the school bus going to school during the week and wondered what it will look like if she took a walk instead.

Secretly, she always wanted the day her mother will send her to the Epe fish market. It was on the other side of the small lake that separated it from their house, unlike the nearby markets that were a stone's throw away.

There was a farm located near the market. Damilola also couldn't wait to take a closer look at the pattern of farming that, from the school bus, looked so beautiful, like the cornrows she was used to making her hair into.

It would take less than 20 minutes to reach the market. Damilola was really happy because she would be using the footbridge for the first time ever. She wanted to use the footbridge so that she would tell her friends at

school that she had finally walked on it.

Damilola was really excited, singing as she went along. The morning sun was not harsh. She enjoyed it all the way. She quickened her steps as she came down the bridge and ran to the edge of the farm so she would walk slowly, in order to observe it.

Splat Splat Splat. Her shoes made a sound as she went.

"Good morning, Uncle Tsola," she waved as she greeted the

man ploughing the soul. Mr. Tsola was their neighbour. He had been a farmer for more than 20 years, long before Damilola was born.

"Good morning, Dami, are you going to the market?" Mister Tsola replied waving back at Damilola.

"Yes, I am, to buy fish!" she replied.

Then she asked the question that had been on her mind all the while,

"That part of the farm, what's

it called?" She pointed to the section.

"O, Damilola. We call them beds and ridges."

"No. I thought they were cornrows." Damilola was surprised. She was hearing that for the first time.

"No, they're not. Cornrows are a different thing. We can't talk about that now."

"Okay, thank you uncle Tsola. Let me run to the market. I must not be out for long."

"Okay, good luck. Make sure you are careful and buy what you are told to," he said.

"I will, thank you." she replied, already continuing her journey.

By the time Damilola got to the market, she had become hungry. She realised she hadn't eaten before leaving the house

"Oh no," she said to herself.

The market was abuzz with chatter. She had been told so much about it. Now she was seeing it. There were

many stalls. Some used only umbrellas, others had tents but it was a wet market. Majority sold fish; the rest sold other seafood. The traders were separated into sections, depending on what they sold. Damilola looked in the direction her mother had told her she would spot Aunty Bisi's light blue umbrella. She looked and looked and eventually recognized it. It was at the edge of a row. That way, Damilola won't miss her way in the maze of buyers and sellers in the central area.

As Damilola picked up her pace to reach Aunty Bisi's stall, her tummy rumbled. She was hungry and started thinking of all the food she could have eaten before leaving the house. She wished she hadn't been too eager to leave.

As she got closer, she saw a spot where roast corn was being sold. It was fresh from the nearby farm and gave an aroma that made her slow down her pace and savour it. She imagined what it'd taste

like if it landed in her mouth. When she looked from the corner of her eyes, the sparks were flying with raspy noise.

Damilola was tempted. She was really tempted, but prayed for God to help her not to use the money meant for the fish to but something else.

"Hello little Dami! What have you come to buy?"

She had arrived at Aunty Bisi's stand. Aunty Bisi's question had a smile backing it.

"Good morning, Aunty Bisi! I want to buy mackerel fish. The one for five hundred naira," Damilola said, taking out the purse at once and unzipping it to bring out the money.

"You're a very good girl, Dami. Some girls your age cannot even get one thing that their parents would send them to get, instead they'd go and buy just anything else."

Aunty Bisi said the words, looking keenly at Damilola with admiration. She took the

money and gave her the fish in a nylon bag which Damilola then put back in the bag she had taken with her, apart from the purse.

Aunty Bisi also noticed that Damilola wasn't talking. As she turned to leave, Aunty Bisi stopped her and asked, "Are you okay, Dami? You don't seem happy."

"I'm just hungry. I didn't bother to have anything before I left home and I don't have any more money to get a snack." she replied. Her tone was low.

As Damilola made to leave, Aunt Bisi spoke to her again.

"O, my baby, you're such a good girl. It's good that you bought what you needed first. Come let me get you something. Do you mind if I got you some roast corn. It's over there, fresh from the farm and tastes nice with pear or coconut." Damilola's face lightened up.

She said a lively "yes," even before Aunt Bisi had finished what she was saying.

As Damilola went home, she was extremely glad. She hadn't allowed herself to fall into the trap using the money wrongly. At home, she got a reward. Her mother gave her a big hug after she narrated the entire story.

"That's my girl!" she said, before making Damilola's favourite meal of rice, beans and pepper stew with the fish she had just bought from the market.

MORAL OF THE STORY

**Always obey instructions
because obedience brings
great rewards.**