

## Yuppy Father

**Bunmi Oyeyemi Julius-Adeoye<sup>1</sup>**

I heard them calling him “Yuppy Father.” I asked why and was told that he was given that name because no party or ceremony in the Ebute-Metta east area that involved food and drinks evaded him – he was always in attendance and made sure he ate and took away. They said he also liked touching the buttocks of every fat woman that passed by.

When we got to our present house, I could not help but notice at the balcony near the public tap, a middle-aged pot-bellied man with each strand of hair knotted and eyes whose retinas seemed out of place. The incisors of both the upper and the lower jaw were missing and the man’s strides were taken as gently as that of the discontented chameleon. His only clothing was a pair of shorts whose brown colour seemed to have descended from white.

Anyone hearing him out of sight would not quickly get a hint of the fact that Yuppy Father was a man whose brain was far from sane.

During one of the days that my younger ones left for school without filling the water containers, and being at home on a forced break – my lecturers had gone on strike – I had to go downstairs to fetch water. As the eleventh on the queue I was left with no other choice than to hear Yuppy Father relate his adventures at the parties he attended. He relayed them with such eloquence in the Queens English that one tended to see sanity in his insanity.

“Don’t just mind them”, he said, clanging the plastic plate and the stick in his hands.

“Can you imagine the effrontery, the audacity of that common pepper seller? She served me amala without meat. And why? Because I was not dressed in white and purple like the others. Nonsense, rubbish. A whole me, N.C.E, holder, class teacher of form 4A, the hottest in the school”.

As he made his complaints prancing about, he suddenly stopped, turned his face heavenwards and started to shout.

“No, no. No one can get me. I will not allow you to tamper with my brain the second time. No....”

Saying this, Yuppy Father raced off through our buckets breaking a plastic container in the process and off he went towards the main road opposite. He crossed to the other side still talking and wielding his plate and stick ferociously. And thank goodness the oncoming vehicle had a good brake system, Yuppy Father would have been history.

All the other people who had come to fetch water went off in the usual Lagosian manner of turning into spectators whenever they saw anything that seemed to go out of the sphere of the ordinary. I seized the opportunity to shift my bucket which was now at the sixth position to the tap, fetched water and went up to complete the domestic chores I had to do.

The next morning, I woke up to thank God that the episode of Yuppy Father chasing me with a stick was just a dream. But unfortunately for me, I had to fetch water again but this time around I was the

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short story written in 2008 is published in her memory.

only one at the tap and Yuppy Father was already there. I tried my best to pretend as if he did not exist so that my dream will not come to pass. I then took my bucket, rinsed it and placed it well to fetch the tear – drop – like water.

“You are just like Americana my last wife,” Yuppy Father suddenly said. I was startled and almost picked up my bucket to take to my heels.

“Hey, don’t run. I won’t hurt you. I know I am mad but not all the time,” Yuppy Father said and somehow with a child-like faith I believed him and placed my bucket back. He continued to talk to me and because I love hearing stories I listened with rapt attention. I stood with one leg forward in readiness to take to flight in the case that he relapses.

“It was because I married Americana that I am like this today. That witch Sikira, was my first wife. Government decided to give us Udoji workers salaries windfall and as a Moslem with money I decided to take another wife. I married Sadiat who I called Americana – slim and beautiful with pointed nose. She looked just like you. Sadiat spoke like someone from America but had never been to the local airport let alone the international wing of the airport.

“Well, Sikira, the first wife became jealous and she poisoned my food and ran away with our two children. I was at the teaching Hospital for two months. It was Americana that took care of me. We had to sell all our belongings – T.V, radio, refrigerator, and Americana’s’ jewelleryes.

“I got better and Americana and I knew we had to start life over again. By that time Udoji could no longer come to the rescue and my teacher’s salary was not enough. Americana then told me she would borrow money to do trade. She did and things got better for us. I had to resign from

my teaching job because I no longer had strength enough to go to work – the doctor had advised that I stay off work anyway. So Sadiat became more like the bread-winner of the house. I did not mind but....”

He stopped when he saw me turn off the tap because my bucket was full to overflowing. Yuppy Father became angry and stood up towards me.

“Oh I see. Your teacher is talking and you are looking out the window. You must be punished you stupid student.”

He started chasing me as I saw in my dream. I had to leave my bucket and up I went. I did not even know whether I climbed the stairs or did a high jump. It was not until noon time when I knew he would have gone in search of lunch that I had the courage to get down to carry my bucket which surprisingly was still there and had not been taken away by the ‘owners’.

Two weeks later, I heard over the radio that my striking lecturers would return to the classroom. I was glad and started preparing to go back to school after six months at home. I was just too happy to leave home and all the stress of the domestic chores and the fear of falling prey to Yuppy Father who had started calling me Americana. I tried my best to avoid him. Anytime he was at his usual position I would not fetch water until I was sure he was not there.

However, within these two weeks, my ears itched to hear the remaining part of the Americana story. When it was time for me to leave for school, I concluded that that was going to be one of the uncompleted stories I would hear.

On the day of my departure, my siblings were on mid-term break so I got two of them to help me with my baggage filled with food stuff to the motor garage. Before I could finish descending the stairs,

I could hear Yuppy Father talking. I told my sibling to wait for me and I went to sit in one corner out of Yuppy Father's sight as I figured out he was still talking about Americana to some guys who had come to fetch water.

"So Americana could no longer bear my womanising", he said. I guessed he had told them a substantial part of the story.

"I now attended almost all parties in town and it was with Americana's money. As I went to these parties, the part I loved most was when I sprayed women and musicians with money and they sang my praise.

"What broke the camel's back was when I took a woman to my matrimonial home and Americana caught us in the act. She went out like a wounded lion and before I could think of what to do, almost with the speed of lightning she came back with a huge ring on her finger. She used it to hit me and my mistress and...."

"We can understand the rest of the story. We are all Yoruba", I heard a man say. "Where can we find her to beg to ...?"

Yuppy Father roared in laughter and then switched off into some other undecipherable discourse this time around definitely not with the people around him but I guessed with some supernatural beings.

As I sat there, I went into deep thoughts wishing I could just loose this man from the shackles of Americana. Indeed, he was to blame for his fate but....

My thoughts were broken.

"Americana." I heard the unmistakable voice of Yuppy Father's call from behind my back. "You must give me back the key to my sanity" he barked out and I nearly jumped out of my skin screaming the names of my younger ones

who had gone to join the audience of Yuppy Father. We almost raced off without checking for traffic although this time around Yuppy Father was not chasing but just stood there and laughed.

I got to school and soon forgot about my experience with the mad man as there was a lot of catching up to do with my roommates and course mates. Compared with their own stories from abroad and the new designer wears they had brought, I could not tell anyone that the most interesting part of the break was my experience with a mad man who said I looked like his wife!