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**If I Live Again**

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# Foreword

I

f I Live Again is a play in which the author, in all ramification, dramatizes the biblical tenets of faith, hope and charity.

Mr. & Mrs. Jackson Tannah, who was, for 15 years of childless married life, exposed to the taunting, of fate, remained undaunted in their faith in one another and implicit confidence in providence. The wife’s charitable disposition demonstrated in her early morning daily activities in the Lord’s vineyard no doubt earned her a blessing – the birth of twin children (a boy and a girl) with whom she continued her work. When one day, at the age of twelve, these children demanded to know why they alone had to sweep the church while others “enjoy it afterwards”. The happy mother bringing the twins together under her arms tells them “You see, we are licensed to love”

The twins – Mark and Madonna – thus imbued with a sense of divine love grew in charity towards neighbours and fear of God, in spite of vicissitudes brought about by war which dispersed the entire family. Being God-chosen, the kids found fortune in foster homes enjoyed good education which their parents were individually pining away for loss of each other and their children. Mrs. Mariya Tannah later became bedridden, while jack remarried and had a son.

The drama of the Tannah’s Family life would be likened to the work of the English famous author, William Shakespeare, the title of which is ALL’S WELL THAT ENDS WELL. For, tossed on by the wind of fortune, the Tannah’s had pleasant surprise of their life when accidentally they were re-united. This gave a new lease of life to sick Mrs. Tannah as unbelievably she once again beholds her lost family (husband Jack and twin children now Rev. Father Mark and Rev. Sister Madonna). To God be the glory.

If I Live Again, a topical drama makes a very interesting and easy reading and one is spellbound and propelled to read on and on with hunger for an encore even at the end of the work.

I recommend the book to anyone who happens to come across it.

F.C. Ilo

## Acknowledgement

I am grateful to all those who contributed their time, money, talents and expertise to the writing of If I Live Again. In a special way, I want to thank Mrs. C.N. Abah, the former principal, Girls’ Grammar School, Awkunanawu Enugu for making my books accessible her school. Thank you ma.

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I will not forget my Mother (Ezinne) Mrs. C. Ilo for her marvelous contributions towards the realization of this project. I thank my husband Mr. Chiemezie V. Kanu. I am indebted to my sisters Mrs. F.C. Bassey, Dr. (Mrs) May Umeh, my brother Mr. Chinedu Nnanna Ilo and Engr. Uchenna Francis Illo (Jnr).

## Dedication

To the Holy Spirit for all the inspirations.

And in loving memory of my dad, Francis Chukwuemezie Ilo

who never failed to go through all my manuscripts and did all the necessary corrections. May He continue to R.I.P.

PHASE 1:

**LIBERTY CITY**

### JACK TANNAH’S HOUSE

Jack Tannah (popularly known as J.T.) is seated in a well-padded cushion inside his seldom used parlour. He is a young man of about forty-five. He is dressed in an immaculate white shirt, well-tucked in black velvety trousers with a simple black bow tie. His hair is neatly trimmed with a sharp parting at the left. In the centre of the room is a round ornamental table on which are placed some artificial flowers. On either side of the flowers is a photograph. One is a wedding photograph of Jack and Mariya. The other is that of Jack on his arrival from London, taken at Liberty International Airport. Like many such rooms, there are artistic frame works on the walls. Our attention must return to Jack, who is putting on his shoes in readiness to go to work. Besides him sits his mother (Dorcas), a woman of around sixty-five years, a retired Headmistress, stoutly built. She looks downcast.

Jack: (Tying his shoes lace) Mama, please make yourself comfortable. I have to go out now, but when I come back in the evening, we shall have enough time to ourselves to discuss the matter.

Dorcas: (Turning to him, enraged) Discuss, which matter? (sighs and sits up) Listen to me J.T., it is time you stopped deceiving yourself and try to listen to a few home truths! Try and be more realistic about life and how to live it out!

Jack: (Shocks) What was that comment supposed to mean mama?

Dorcas: Your time would be better spent pondering the seriousness of your situation instead of asking me to stay in a house that has little or no comfort to offer anybody.

Jack: Mama, you’re already choking me with your unfounded insinuations. But believe me, I have made adequate provision for your comfort while I’m away to work.

Dorcas: What nonsense arrangements are you talking about?

Jack: Why do you take special delight in trying to put me off with your unkind remarks? Don’t you realize that such unguarded comments, could easily court trouble? But in all honesty, there is enough food in the house for your comfort.

Dorcas: (Mimics him) Is that all there is to the much talked about comfort?

Jack: To equally make your short stay worthwhile, you have the television and radio sets at your disposal. Not to talk of the three housekeepers – Piccolo, Matilda and Ruka who are always there at your beck and call. What more can you expect?

Dorcas: (More viciously) Stop pretending as if you are still ignorant of my simple request!

Jack: And to further assuage your boredom, I shall personally invite some kids from the neighbourhood to come around and keep you company while.

Dorcas: (Screams) Stop! Just stop and listen to yourself J.T. before you drive me crazy with your senselessness! (Shakes her head severally) I’m totally ashamed of you!

Jack: Mama!

Dorcas: (Still fuming) Often times, I begin to regret why I failed to give you out to the slave merchants in your prime.

Jack: Mama, I don’t quite seem to understand you these days. You confuse me a lot.

Dorcas: (Starts sobbing) How can you understand me when you have willingly allowed yourself to be chained by a woman? I’m surprised at you my son!

Jack: Not again!

Dorcas: For fifteen years now, you have been married to that witch with nothing to show for it!

Jack: (Angrily) Mama, I think I have respected you enough on this matter, but it appears you’re gradually beginning to overstep your bounds.

Dorcas: How? Or has our tradition degenerated so rapidly that it has now become a taboo for a mother to make her feelings known to her own son?

Jack: How do you feel morally justified to tag my wife a witch, in my presence even without batting an eyelid? (Flares up) This is unfashionable and unacceptable to me!

Dorcas: Pardon my flippancy my son. But …

Jack: For goodness sake mama, always do me the favour of not mistaking my loyalty to you for cowardice.

Dorcas: I will try and remember that my son. But I want you to further understand my reasons for this.

Jack: What reasons could be good enough to make you castigate Mariya so unjustly? (Rises out of anger).

Dorcas: Then sit down and listen to me my son. (Jack sits down reluctantly while Dorcas continues) Our people say that a mouse with two holes will not die easily.

Jack: how does that concern me? Am I a mouse?

Dorcas: If only you could borrow a leaf from this proverbial mouse, certainly, we shall all smile to the altar very soon.

Jack: What are you talking about? Make yourself clear to me.

Dorcas: It is often said that sometimes, it pays to try some foolishness where wisdom has failed. A drowning man they equally say catches a straw because he has no alternative.

Jack: Hit the nail on the head! You are already getting on my nerves with those rootless idioms.

Dorcas: Need we stretch the matter? Simply use your brain my son.

Jack: Then let the cat out of the bag.

Dorcas: (Hesitates) Since Mariya cannot give you a child, why don’t you swallow your pride and take a new bride?

Jack: (Embattled) Another wife? Impossible! Never! Talk of the devil!

Dorcas: You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Jack: Because I turned down your unwholesome idea of a second wife?

Dorcas: Because it is both shameful and agonizing that fifteen years into your miserable married life, you still cannot call a spade, a spade. For goodness sake, Mariya is barren! She needs a co-wife!

Jack: What does it cost to make you understand that Mariya is a complete woman?

Dorcas: Then let her prove it. Or do you imagine that I would fall for her cheap tricks just the way you did? Never!

Jack: But the doctor has actually certified her clinically sound.

Dorcas: That is not the point! Besides, her medical status at this eleventh hour does not enlist my slightest sympathy. Stop making unnecessary excuses for her.

Jack: Perhaps it is pertinent at this point to jog your memory a little bit.

Dorcas: And what do you stand to achieve with that?

Jack: Just to remind you that you contributed ninety-nine percent to this present dilemma, which we are all passing through.

Dorcas: Point of correction! As much as possible, try to be cautious enough not to trifle with my person.

Jack: You seem to have forgotten so soon that the idea for me to marry off Mariya on my return from the United Kingdom was your brainchild? Am I lying?

Dorcas: I refuse to succumb to your false accusation.

Jack: Of course, my marriage to Mariya was your sole-decision and which I had to swallow hook, line and sinker just to massage your ego. Why deny it now?

Dorcas: (Sternly) Didn’t you have the choice of saying no to that arrangement at that time?

Jack: (Livid with anger) There she goes again! Blatant lies!

Dorcas: (Ignores him and starts crying) J.T. I need a grandchild! I need a grandchild! Don’t turn me into an object of scorn in this community.

Jack: Mama, you surprise me when you talk like this, when it is evident you already have eleven grandchildren from my younger siblings. Are they not human being?

Dorcas: But you are the first child of the family.

Jack: Does it matter?

Dorcas: Yes it counts!

Jack: Does it make any visible difference in your life?

Dorcas: (Keeps silent).

Jack: (Continues) Does it stop you from having a fulfilled day with any of your grandchildren whenever you want to? For goodness sake, leave my wife and I alone!

Dorcas: (Angry) I am now convinced that Mariya has out-rightly bewitched you. She’s only hiding under the cloak of religion. Don’t be deceived! You have treated this matter with kid gloves enough.. Act! Be a man!

Jack: Take it or leave it, I refuse to be stampeded and be dragged into this discussion on your self-aggrandizement.

Dorcas: What?

Jack: Just exactly what you heard. But why are you even crying louder than the bereaved? Don’t allow this non-issue to overwhelm you completely.

Dorcas: (Angered further) I wonder what has come over you? What type of spell has Mariya finally cast on you that you now react so indifferently to this issue at stake?

Jack: There is no reason to get alarmed yet.

Dorcas: It pains to think that you are still entangled with that good for-nothing woman. A woman who cannot even cook well. Her food is always like poison in the mouth because she cooks with rancid oil.

Jack: (Shrugs his shoulders and keep quiet)

Dorcas: (Continues) A woman who squanders your hard-earned money. A woman of cheap morality! A woman who often behaves like a bear with a sore head. A woman whose deceased father was a professional beggar. A woman who was brought up a penniless dirt farm. A woman who …

Jack: All that should be my headache, not yours!

Dorcas: Then why cover up Mariya with her multiple sins? Expose her and free yourself from her perpetual bondage.

Jack: Mama, you know how much I try to avoid bandying words with you, but do you realize how much I hate to recall that you could be saying all these of your own daughter-in-law? Such insensitivity!

Dorcas: Nonsense! I would rather die than waste my pity on Mariya. She does not deserve it!

Jack: But what if I have chosen not to have children at all, is that a crime? After all, the world is already over-populated.

Dorcas: Then you must have your head examined properly by a psychiatrist. Madness does not run in our blood!

Jack: What?

Dorcas: Oh, does it not occur to you that your ungodly remark smacks of disloyalty to this noble family? I wish your father were alive to listen to your senseless talk.

Jack: (In a contemplative mood) It is quite amazing that all these frequent verbal skirmishes in this house are borne out of your over-zealous and inordinate desires to…

Dorcas: (Shouts him down) Enough! Jack, I can’t sit down here all day and have you insult me to my face. I’m still your mother.

Jack: (Vehemently) Then you must learn to live with the truth that what can’t be cured must be endured. Allow us to continue to wait upon the Lord for the fruit of the womb.

Dorcas: (Sneers) Wait upon the Lord indeed! So, it has never crossed your mind that waiting upon the Lord for fifteen idle years is just a figment of your stupid imaginations?

Jack: (Keeps silent).

Dorcas: Wake up from your slumber! Mariya is a devil! Stop supping with the devil!

Jack: Mama!

Dorcas: For goodness sake, the days of idolized, flamboyant, miracle-expectations are over! Stop wallowing in abject self-ignorance. Take the bull by the horns!

Jack: Certainly not my funeral!

Dorcas: In any case, forgive me for getting involved in this apparent crisis in your marriage.

Jack: What are you driving at?

Dorcas: Did not our ancestors say that self-inflicted tragedy should not be mourned?

Jack: Meaning?

Dorcas: That he who brings ant-infested firewood into the house should not complain when the lizards come visiting. You are the architect of your own problem.

Jack: I see.

Dorcas: Just beware of he who says that the hippopotamus is not ugly. Your condition is ugly! Do something about it and stop groping in the dark like a blind man!

Jack: But remember that if you give a stammerer enough time, he will pronounce his father’s name. Give us more time!

Dorcas: Spare your breath! I’m not staying in this demon-possessed house a minute longer!

Jack: Why the sudden change of mind?

Dorcas: Your house is too cold for my liking.

Jack: Really?

Dorcas: No children! No noise! No cries! Nothing!

Jack: The chameleon says he cannot because the forest is aflame change the slow and dignified walk, which he inherited from his forefathers. Patience is my watchword.

Dorcas: Watch it! It is only when an egg breaks that you realize that it is not all white. A stubborn fowl will hear better in the pot of soup.

Jac:k:: (Points towards heaven and says) Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Dorcas: Continue to fool about with the old saying of yours, which has long ceased to excite anybody. A mere cliché! Why don’t you try something more constructive and objective in its place?

Jack: Whether you approve of my saying or not, make no mistakes about our undaunted faith in the name of …

Dorcas: Suit yourself! Just go ahead and continue to dance to the rhythm of your uncoordinated lyrics with Mariya! Nonsense! (snatches her handbag and storms out of the house).

TO READ

THE COMPLETE VERSION

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