

Ikani's Homestead Short Stories



www.ikanishomestead.com

Ejiro And The Boy From Nowhere

Ismaila Ikani Sule

COPYRIGHT I. I. Sule 2003. First published online in 2002. While all rights remain reserved, the copyright holders grant their permission to individuals or organizations wishing to reproduce this work in hard copy form and sell for profit, provided there are no alterations or modifications (including the addition or reduction of material) to the written material content, images and illustrations, and/or any advertisements included. **Such intending publishers must include their names and contact details for purposes of identification on the published work.** This book is to be reproduced exactly as it is with EXCEPTION to alterations or modifications made only to text type-face or page dimensions to fit the individual or organization's taste. Advertisements and images or illustrations must be maintained in the same positions relative to the text. Printing may be in colour or black and white. Neither the authors nor Ikanishomestead.com shall be held liable for any individual or organization's action with respect to any laws governing publication in their respective countries. All characters, distinctive names and likenesses thereof, persons and/or institutions in this book are fictional and any similarity between them and those of any existing living or dead person, or organization/institution are, thus, purely coincidental and not intended. This book is offered free for downloading from Ikani's Homestead Free Book at www.ikanishomestead.com/publishfree.htm along with others. For information regarding the placement of advertisements in Ikani's Homestead Free Books, please contact Ismaila Ikani Sule, 20A Maikano Road, P. O. Box 10469, Kaduna or email serviceng@ikanishomestead.com (if you reside in Nigeria) and serviceus@ikanishomestead.com (if you reside in the US or elsewhere).

Ejiro skipped and sang as she walked home from school. It was lovely Monday afternoon and she always enjoyed walking home from school. Her home was just some five minutes stroll from the school and she wasn't in any hurry.

Ejiro was eight years old. She had fair skin, big bright eyes and a cheerful smile whenever she was feeling happy, which was the case most times. She loved to read and was the best pupil in her class. She was also good at singing, acting and making friends. Once, when she was seven, she represented her school in a drama contest and won a prize for her acting. The school headmistress, teachers and other students were very proud of the honour she brought their school. Everyone liked Ejiro Adam. No two people were more proud of her than Dr. Adam and Mrs. Adam, her parents. Friends and relatives would always tell them how lucky they were to have been blessed with such a delightful child as their daughter. Dr. Adam worked in a hospital, which was situated right in the centre of town, and Mrs. Adam had a store of her own where she sold all kinds of things to people. Ejiro had an older brother who was away at boarding school in another town. Oh yes, what a happy family the Adams were.

The weather was just pleasant. It had rained the night before and a few clouds still drifted lazily across the sky shielding off the sun's rays every now then. Birds were singing everywhere, colourful insects buzzed about their daily chores and the air smelled beautiful. Ejiro knew the farmers would be away on their farms now, hard at work tilling the soil and sowing seeds. She had an uncle who was a farmer and she had been to his farm with once. It was a place she always had clear memories of her uncle and cousins tilling the soil with their hoes and making long rows across the land where maize seeds would be sowed.

They would work hard all day and she would help them clear the cut weeds. Then when they got hungry, her uncle would get a tuber of yam and roast for them. They would eat it with palm oil and some water. It was delicious.

Ejiro skipped along. A cool breeze blew over her face, making her smile at its comforting touch. Yellow weaver birds were chirping away noisily from the treetops, clear water from the rains flowed through gutters liked small streams. All around there were leaves of different shades of green, yellow and brown on trees as well as red, purple, orange and blue flowers. The happy little girl smiled as a small wind suddenly caused yellow and brown leaves to gently shower down on her as she went past a mango tree. Some little pink flowers from another tree fell down amongst the leaves too. It felt playful and Ejiro jumped about trying to catch the falling leaves and flowers with her hands and mouth.

She nearly tripped over something lying on the grass before her. She looked closely, it was a boy lying there. He looked very tired. She stopped and examined his clothes. They were dirty and torn in so many places. He had no shoes on and his feet were rather dirty. His hair had been cut very low, untidily too. Suddenly, the boy looked up and saw her. His face was dirty and his eyes looked tired.

“What's the matter? What are you looking at like that?” he asked her.

“Why are you sleeping outside on the road?” Ejiro also asked him.

“I was tired and lay down here to rest a bit. I must have fallen asleep. Were you trying to pick mangoes from this tree here?”



“No,” said Ejiro, “I’m on my way home from school. I nearly tripped over you. Now that you have woken up, why not go to your own home and continue your sleep there.”

The boy looked at her without smiling and she thought she might have angered him in some way. But, he did not attack her.

“I don’t have a house to live in,” he told her, “That is why I fell asleep here.” Ejiro was puzzled.

“You don’t live in a house? Ah-ah, you, your mother and father, where do you all sleep when it is raining? Don’t you all get soaked without a house to stay in?”

The boy stood up, brushing leaves and grass off his tattered clothes. He stretched and squinted his eyes. A bottle cap with a string passed through a hole in it fell out of his trouser pocket and he bent down to pick it up. It was a simple toy. The bottle cap was swung round and round in the middle of the string and when the string was pulled on both ends, the cap would begin to spin. The boy put his toy back in his pocket and looked back at Ejiro. He looked like he had not eaten in days.

“I have no mother, I have no father,” he told her. He seemed interested in her school bag and reached out to touch it, but she pulled it away.

“No mother and father? How can that happen?”

“I don’t know. That’s how it is.” Suddenly he asked: “What is your name?”

“Ejiro,” she replied and asked him what his name was.

“I’m called Ibrahim.”

“Oh, so you stay with your grandmamma and grandpapa, Ibrahim?”

“No.”

“With your uncle and aunt?”

“I don't stay with anybody.”

Now Ejiro was even more puzzled. How could someone be without a mother and father, grandmamma and grandpapa, or uncle and aunt? Ibrahim was yawning. He was certainly a strange person. She moved her bag away from his hand again.

“Okay, where are you from then?”

“Nowhere,” he smiled now, “I come from nowhere. I used to stay with a big fat man and his wife who used to send me out to sell kola nuts. They would beat me whenever I came back to them without selling any and bringing them money. The woman would give me rice with watery soup to eat and I slept in a garage where a motorcycle was parked. The fat man used the motorcycle to pick people from the roads who pay to be carried to different places. Haha, I remember they beat me one day and I got angry and punctured his tyres at night when I went to sleep.”

A ripe mango fruit dropped from the tree they were standing underneath and Ibrahim quickly pushed her aside to snatch it up. He wiped it with his hands and took a large bite out of it. He said it tasted sweet and offered her a bite, but she did not want to touch it so he proceeded to gobble it up on his own. Ejiro thought he was the same age as her or maybe a little older. She remembered one of her teachers at school saying something about children who had no parents. They were called *orphans*. Ibrahim was an orphan.

When he had finished with the fruit and given trying to get another to fall from the high branches above by kicking against the tree trunk, he continued his story.

“One day some men pushed me and made me fall so they could steal my kola nuts and run away. I knew that man and his wife would kill me that day for losing all the kola nuts and money so I ran away and decided never to go back to that house. Now, I

sleep anywhere I can. Sometimes when it rains, I can get to sleep in front of one of those shops or kiosks with roofs sticking out in front to prevent customers getting soaked or burnt by the sun.”

Ejiro wondered how long it would take for the sun to burn a person. A man would be standing in the sun and the next thing his shirt and trousers would catch fire and he would run around screaming before finally ending up somewhere in only his underwear. She giggled, that would be so funny.

“Sometimes, I sleep under sacks or cartons,” Ibrahim continued.

“I sleep in my bed in my room,” Ejiro told him.

“Ah, you are lucky to have parents and money. Me, I have to sleep in different places, but I shall get money one day and then build myself a good house to live in.”

Ejiro smiled. He sat down on a brick, stretched himself again then began to sing. He could sing well.

*Hey-yo
I am living alone
Moving here to there alone
But I am happy
Happy I must be
One day things will be good for me
Sweet as sugar put in tea
I am patient for one day
One day I shall be blessed
Blessed with good things waiting for me
Hey-yo
Hey-yo-yaya-yo-ho*

He began to wiggle his arms and about in a funny manner and Ejiro began to laugh. It was such a funny sitting-down-and-acting-silly dance. When Ibrahim saw how he much was making the girl laugh, he decided to do some more. He jumped up to his feet and began to point and move his arms about. He was imitating someone he had seen on television looking through the window of a barber's shop. He was *rapping*. He did not know the actual words of course, he just made up his own.

*I say I'm the Ibrahim
And I'll say it again, the only Ibrahim
Cool smooth mango demolisher
One, two, three
Nobody messing with me
All around town, all over the world
Boys and girls shouting my name
Rap is never going to be the same
I like to make people happy
So as I make you shuffle to the left, slide to the right
Enjoy don't fight
Shout out loud, shout out louder
I say I'm the Ibrahim
And I'll say it again, the only Ibrahim
Cool smooth mango demolisher
One, two, three
Nobody messing with me*



He kept pointing and moving his arms about like the rap artistes he had seen and Ejiro laughed and laughed. She thought he looked like a dancing chicken. She had some *akara* (fried bean cakes) her mother had prepared for her to eat at school. These she handed over to the overjoyed boy who accepted them eagerly. He told her he had to scavenge around for his meals and sometimes joined the boys who roamed around streets and homes begging.

“What about school?” she asked him.

“They serve free food there?”

“No, don't you go to school?”

“No, I don't go to school. I don't have any money, you know!” Ibrahim laughed.

She promised to leave some more food for him tomorrow when she came back from school. She was such a kind-hearted child. She heard him singing again as she resumed her journey home. She told her parents all about Ibrahim and the funny way he danced while they had supper. Her father began to wiggle and rap also. They all laughed.

“I'm the so-so-so... Rap, rappy boy...” he went. It was really funny. All the while though, her parents assumed Ibrahim was a new friend she had made at school.

Mrs. Adam told Ejiro to invite Ibrahim home to lunch the next day after school. Ejiro was really excited.

The next day, she made her way home again through the bright colours of green, brown, yellow, pink, purple and blue that so beautifully decorated the world around her. The birds were singing happily. She got to the mango tree from the previous day, but there was nobody there. Then Ibrahim sprang out from some bushes behind her. They laughed. She offered him some bread left over from school and told him her mother had invited him over to her home for lunch.

“Woo-hoo!” Ibrahim let a cry of delight and followed his friend home.

The little children made an odd-looking couple: one in her clean, smart school uniform, the other in his ragged clothes with no shoes on his feet. Children, how happy they can be. Ibrahim sang and rapped all the way.

*Hey-yo
I am living alone
Moving here to there alone
But I am happy
Happy I must be
One day things will be good for me
Sweet as sugar put in tea
I am patient for one day
One day I shall be blessed
Blessed with good things waiting for me
Hey-yo
Hey-yo-yaya-yo-ho*

Dr. Adam was at the hospital and Mrs. Adam was at the store so there was no one home but the housemaid, Kemi. Kemi was twelve years old and attended a secondary school in the mornings and came to work in the afternoons. She cooked and washed and helped Ejiro with her homework when they were the only ones in the house. At the moment, she was busy preparing lunch in the kitchen when the children walked into the house through the front door.

“Ejiro, is that you?” Kemi called out from the kitchen.

“Yes, I’m back from school. Mama said I could bring my friend home to have lunch with us.” Ejiro yelled back from the living room.

“Hmm, so long as it’s not one of those fat friends of yours who eat like they could finish all the food in the house. Cooking isn’t that easy. Wait, I’ll come and tell you

about something scary that happened at school today.”

Kemi and Ejiro were really the best of friends. “Ejiro, go and take off your uniform first,” said Kemi and the eight-year-old did as she was told. She told Ibrahim to wait for her in the living room while she went in to change. The room overwhelmed him and he busied himself taking a closer look at the wall clock, decorations on walls, the armchairs and sofa and the plastic fruits and flowers adorning shelves on the wall. He had never seen so many wonderful things all in one place. Ejiro changed into her favourite orange tie-and-dye designed dress and ran out to join the bedazzled boy clutching some toys she wanted to show him.

Lunch was soon ready and Kemi brought out three plates of hot, steaming food giving out such a delicious aroma that made Ibrahim's mouth start to water and his stomach began to growl.

“Yes, time to handle some food,” Kemi beamed, carefully balancing three plates in her arms as she stepped into the adjoining dining room. She put the plates on the dining table and turned to face the living room.

“Ejiro bring your friend over to... aaarghh!” Kemi screamed when she saw Ibrahim in his dirty tattered clothes standing there with her employers' daughter.

“Ejiro!” she started, “What is that beggar-boy doing in the house? Quick, get away from him! He has diseases! Get away from here you!”

Kemi took off her head-scarf and tried to beat Ibrahim away with it. He got scared and tried to hide behind an armchair. Who was this crazy girl out to get him with her scarf?

“Leave him alone,” Ejiro was screaming at the housemaid. Kemi clutched the little girl's arm and tried to drag her to what she considered safety behind her. Tiny as she may have been compared to the older girl, Ejiro put up a strong resistance and tried

to explain things to Kemi.

“He is my friend, Kemi!”

“How did that filthy thing follow you home?” the older girl swiping out with her scarf wasn't listening, “Get out, dirty beggar-boy! Get out!”

Kemi had unwittingly positioned herself in front of the front door now and Ibrahim got even more scared. He thought she was trying to block his escape, corner him and give him a serious trashing. He ducked behind another chair then jumped and slid across the dining table knocking over the plates of food placed there. Fried yam chips spilled over the table and on to the floor. Hungrily, he grabbed some and stuffed them into his mouth seconds before Kemi came dashing his way.

“Stop it! Stop it!” Ejiro cried after them. The unexpected happened, she tripped and banged her head against the leg of a chair. She began to cry. She screamed and clutched her head. Kemi started and rushed over to the fallen girl. She helped her back up and began to rub the side of her head, which hurt in hopes of soothing the pain away.

“Waaaa, mama!” Ejiro wailed, tears streaming down her face. The housemaid was scared. What would Madam say when she got back? Kemi could lose her job for being so careless with her daughter! She forgot all about the ragged she had been after and concentrated her efforts on quieting the distraught little girl down.

“Stop crying, eh... Look, I'll get you some sweets. Please...”

“No, no, the pain is too much. Waaaaa!” she screamed even louder.

Then just like a radio with batteries finally run down, she was quiet. Kemi stared, surprised but relieved. Ejiro began to laugh. Kemi could hear someone singing outside. She opened the front door and peered out.

*...Cool smooth mango demolisher
One, two, three...*

Ibrahim was outside now, doing his funny dance. Kemi looked dumbfounded, she thought the boy had gone mad. Suddenly, she found herself laughing as well. That made him happy and he began to move and wobble about as his sang. It was as if his legs were made of wobbly cables. What a hilarious sight he was!

Much later, the trio were all seated outside (Kemi did not want Ibrahim getting things in the house all dirtied up, she said he needed a bath and new clothes) underneath a lemon tree with so many yellow, ripe fruits adorning its branches, finishing up the delicious meal Kemi had prepared. Ibrahim was doing something else that greatly intrigued and amused the girls.

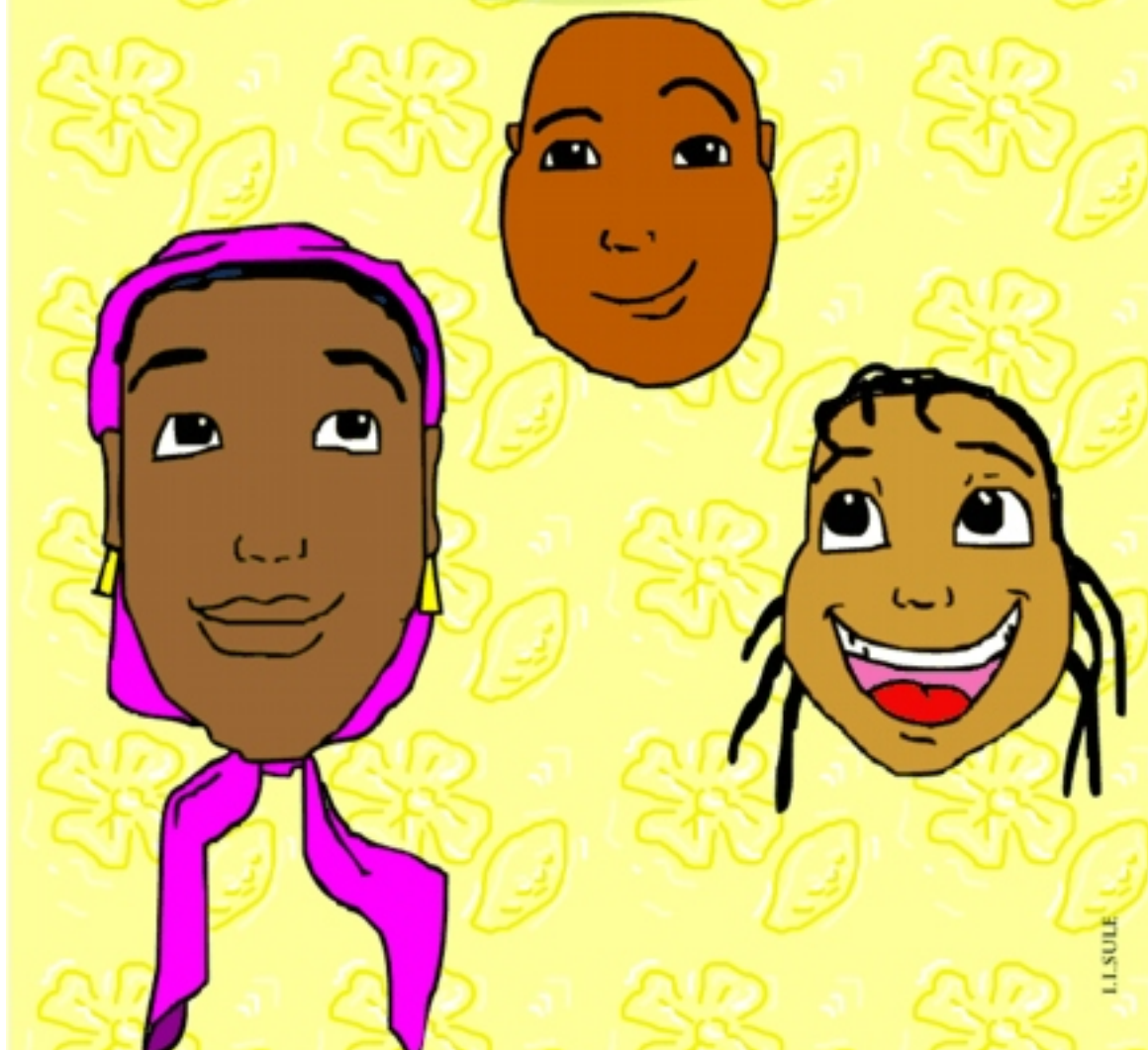
“So, what is 145 multiplied by 18 then?” It had been difficult to get him to understand the concept of multiplication at first, but he got the hang of it when Kemi explained 'multiplication' was another way of saying 'this amount put in this number of places'. He had not been to school, you know.

“2610”, came his answer, met with applause as the girls compared it with the figure on Kemi's calculator and realized he was right again. He had solved twelve addition and nine multiplication problems correctly already using nothing else but his mind. It was astonishing! Ejiro wondered how he was doing it.

She knew a simple multiplication trick herself, involving figures beginning with one and ending with zeros such as 10, 100, and 1000. When asked to multiply any number by such figures you merely took the zeros and added them to the number. This way 2 multiplied by 10 was 20; 45 multiplied by 100 was 4500; and 56465 multiplied by 10000 was 564650000.

Two multiplied by ten is twenty
(two put in ten places)

$$2 \times 10 = 20$$



**“... Hmm, I’m looking for something
African and decorative for my livingroom...”**



Ikani's Homestead - The Marketplace
www.ikanishomestead.com/marketplace

It was about four o'clock when Dr. Adam got home. Ejiro's mother arrived forty minutes later. They were both surprised when they saw Ibrahim in the compound. Surprised turned into pleasant amusement though when they witnessed his mathematical skills and arm and leg wiggling.

"Where are you from?" Dr. Adam asked and his daughter chorused with the lad: "Nowhere!" Ibrahim retold his tale about being an orphan, running away from the fat man and his kola nuts, and basically living on the street. Mrs. Adam felt very sorry for him.

"How sad," she said, "Alright, you can have some neater, old clothes we have hanging around the house. They belonged to Ejiro's older brother; he used to wear them when he was a little boy like you. You need a bath first though, Kemi show him to the Boys' Quarters where he can take his bath. I believe he can even stay in the vacant room there, close to yours. Okay, I'm off to start work on supper."

Dr. Adam sat in the living room stroking his chin as Kemi led the boy away.

"A gifted child. That boy's a gifted child... Talent wasting away in the streets..." he was murmuring to himself.

"What is a gift child, Papa?" Ejiro asked him.

"*Gifted child*, my dear. That's a child who has extraordinary knowledge and can think and do things in a special way like Ibrahim does. Hmmm, I think we ought to help him by getting him into school."

"He can come to my school and help me out with all the homework." Ejiro laughed as her father grabbed her and tickled her.

When Ibrahim returned after having a bath and putting on some clean clothes, Ejiro's parents were very pleased indeed. He looked so clean, very cute. Ejiro told him he might soon be coming to school to school with her, but he was preoccupied with

sniffing himself.

“Mmm, I am a rich boy now,” he beamed and everyone laughed. They all sat down that evening to a delicious supper and then children went to bed. Dr. Adam stayed up reading a newspaper while his wife watched television. Kemi was awake in her room singing softly to herself.

In the days that followed Ejiro's parents worked with the police trying to see if they could locate any of Ibrahim's relatives; they were given custody of him in a court until a relation could be found (none was); they got him into Ejiro's school and were glad to see how he fitted in easily. He stayed with them and became another fun member of the family. At school he was Captain of the Maths Club and brought honour and glory to the school at competitions they attended.

“Yes, he can calculate, but I'm the one who can act,” Ejiro would smirk playfully. She continued to top her class in academics and won more awards and prizes at school drama contests. One day, some men came to meet Ibrahim. He was given some special tests and told he qualified to go to a school for gifted children. The Adams were pleased to hear this. The school was just on the other side of town. So Ibrahim went to a new school. Ejiro could still nab him at home to help her with her Maths homework though so all was well.

And here our story ends. Make good friends and be sure to work hard at school. You can also sing and wiggle your arms and legs about, if you like.