

THE
DRIIFT
DIARY

DEDE OKEKE

CONTENTS

What Is Inside

The Thing Your Memory Does To You

Four Lines A Day

Where To Keep It, And How To Stay Safe

Every Sunday, Fifteen Minutes

The Thirty-Day Look

Thirty Prompts For The Nights You Are Stuck

The Thing Your Memory Does To You

You are not forgetting what happens in your marriage. You are quietly rewriting it, every week, and the rewriting is what keeps you stuck.

Let me describe something you will recognise.

On Tuesday he says something cold. It lands hard. You carry it around for two days. Then on Thursday he is pleasant at breakfast, and by Friday you have decided that Tuesday was probably your own oversensitivity, and by Sunday you cannot remember what he actually said — only that you felt terrible and that you may have been unfair.

Three weeks later somebody asks how things are and you say, honestly, *"I don't know. Sometimes it is fine."*

That sentence — *sometimes it is fine* — has kept more women in fog than any lie a husband ever told.

Why it happens

Your mind is not being stupid. It is protecting you. Holding a clear, continuous record of being slowly abandoned is unbearable, so the mind does what minds do: it blurs, it discounts, it finds the exception and promotes it to the rule.

One warm evening in a cold month becomes proof that the month was not cold. One good weekend erases six bad weeks. And because you are a woman who wants her marriage to work, you cooperate with the blurring, gratefully.

The result is that you can never answer the only question that matters: *is this getting better or worse?*

You cannot answer it because you have no record. You have feelings, and feelings are weather. This diary is the instrument that turns weather into climate.

WHAT THIS DIARY IS NOT

It is not evidence. You are not building a case against your husband. If you catch yourself writing entries you imagine reading out to somebody one day, stop — you have started prosecuting instead of observing.

It is not a place to vent. Venting feels good and changes nothing. There is one small place for feeling in each entry and it is deliberately small.

It is not a record of him. Half of every entry is about you. That half is the one that will surprise you in six weeks.

Four Lines A Day

This takes three minutes. If it ever takes longer than ten, you are doing it wrong.

Every evening, before you sleep, write four lines. Always the same four. The power is entirely in the sameness — a record only shows you a pattern when the shape of each entry is identical.

Line one: What happened

One or two sentences. Facts only, as a camera would have recorded them.

He came home at 8:40. Ate. Went to the bedroom with his phone. We spoke about the electricity bill and nothing else.

Not: *he ignored me again all evening.* That is a conclusion. Write what a camera would have seen, because a camera does not have a bad week and a camera cannot be talked out of what it saw.

Line two: What I did

This is the line women want to skip, and it is the most valuable line in the diary.

I asked him twice what was wrong. I checked his phone screen when he left it on the table. I made his favourite rice hoping it would change the evening.

Write it plainly, without judging yourself. In four weeks you will read these lines back and see your own pattern with a clarity you cannot get from the inside — the chasing, the checking, the small daily bargaining you did not know you were doing.

Line three: One word for how I felt

One word. Not a paragraph. *Lonely. Angry. Numb. Hopeful. Tired. Frightened. Calm.*

The single word is deliberate. It keeps the feeling in the record without letting the feeling take over the record. And a column of single words over thirty days tells you something a thousand words of description never will.

Line four: One thing that was mine

Something you did that had nothing to do with him or the children. The walk. The friend you called. The twenty minutes with the door closed. The class.

Some nights you will write *nothing*. Write it honestly. A week of *nothing* in this line is the clearest warning sign in the whole diary, because it means you have disappeared again into

managing him.

A COMPLETE ENTRY

Tuesday 12th

Happened: Home at 9. Said the traffic was bad. Ate alone at the table with his phone. Spoke about school fees. Slept turned away.

I did: Waited up. Asked if he was alright, twice. Checked his location on WhatsApp. Did not say what I actually wanted to say.

Felt: Lonely.

Mine: Walked for 20 minutes before the children woke.

That is the whole thing. Four lines. Three minutes. Every night, including the ordinary ones, including the good ones, and *especially* including the ones where nothing at all happened — because a month of nothing happening is itself the most important finding you could possibly record.

Where To Keep It, And How To Stay Safe

A diary you are frightened of somebody finding is a diary you will not write honestly. Solve this before you start.

Be sensible here. You know your own house.

A paper notebook is best if you have somewhere genuinely private — a bag you always carry, a drawer at work, your mother's house. Paper is honest, unhackable, and there is something about writing by hand that slows the mind enough to be truthful.

A phone note works if your phone is locked and yours alone. Give the note a boring name. Not “Marriage”. Something like “Shopping list 3”.

An email to yourself is the safest option for many women. Write the four lines in an email, send it to your own address, and delete it from the sent folder. It is stored, dated automatically, and lives nowhere on any device in your house.

IF YOU DO NOT FEEL SAFE

If the thought of your husband finding a notebook makes you genuinely afraid — not embarrassed, *afraid* — then please pay attention to that fear rather than solving the storage problem.

Fear of that kind is information about your marriage that no diary can improve on. Please speak to someone you trust, your doctor, or a domestic violence support service in your country. Your safety comes first, always, and no guide is worth a risk to it.

The rules that keep it useful

- **Write every night, even when nothing happened.** The empty days are data. A woman who only writes on dramatic days produces a record of drama, not of her marriage.
- **Never write it in anger, and never within an hour of a quarrel.** Wait until you are level. If you cannot be level tonight, write the facts only and leave the rest.
- **Never show him.** Not to prove a point, not in a fight, not ever. The moment it becomes a weapon it stops being a mirror, and you have lost the only clear instrument you own.
- **Do not read back for the first three weeks.** Too soon and you will read your own moods rather than the pattern. Patterns need distance.

Every Sunday, Fifteen Minutes

The daily writing gathers. The weekly review is where you actually see something.

Once a week, sit somewhere quiet with the last seven entries and answer six questions in writing. Do not answer them in your head. The head negotiates.

THE SIX WEEKLY QUESTIONS

1. How many evenings this week contained a real conversation — not logistics, not money, not the children?
2. What is the most common word in my feelings column?
3. How many days did I write something real in the *mine* line?
4. Looking at my *I did* lines: what am I doing over and over that is not working?
5. Did anything happen this week that surprised me — in either direction?
6. If a friend showed me this exact week, written down, what would I honestly say to her?

Question six is the one that does the work. We are all far wiser about other women's marriages than our own, and this

question borrows that wisdom back for yourself. Answer it as though the notebook belonged to your sister, and write down what you would tell her, in the words you would use.

Many women find this question uncomfortable for the first month and indispensable by the second.

Counting instead of feeling

At the end of each weekly review, write down four numbers. That is all.

- Real conversations this week: __
- Days I felt lonely: __
- Days I did something that was mine: __
- Days I chased, checked, or over-explained: __

Four numbers a week. After six weeks you will have a picture of your marriage that no amount of thinking could have produced, and it will be true whether or not you were in a good mood the day you looked at it.

Watch particularly for the relationship between the last two numbers. Almost every woman finds the same thing: the weeks where the *mine* number rises are the weeks where the chasing number falls, and the loneliness follows the chasing rather than following him.

The Thirty-Day Look

After a month, you finally get to ask the question you could not answer before.

Sit down with all thirty entries and read them from the beginning, in order, without stopping to think about any single day. Read it like a story about somebody else. It will take about twenty minutes.

Then answer three questions.

One. Which way is it moving?

Compare week one to week four. Not day to day — week to week. More real conversations or fewer? More warmth or less? More *mine* days or fewer?

Whatever you find, you now know something you did not know a month ago, and you know it in a way that a bad Tuesday cannot take away from you.

Two. What am I doing that keeps failing?

Read only the *I did* lines, all thirty of them, in one go. This is uncomfortable and it is the most useful twenty minutes in the whole method.

Nearly every woman finds the same three or four behaviours repeating: the asking what is wrong, the waiting up, the checking, the extra effort offered as payment. You have probably done one of them more than twenty times this month, and it has produced nothing, and you did not know you were doing it that often.

That is not a reason to feel foolish. It is the reason the Pause exists.

Three. Where did I disappear?

Read only the *mine* line. Count the days you wrote *nothing*.

If it is more than half, then whatever else is true about your marriage, this is the most urgent thing in the notebook. A woman with nothing of her own cannot have the conversation in Step Five from steady ground, because she has no ground. She will beg, because she cannot afford not to.

The diary was never really about catching him. It was about catching yourself, in the act of vanishing.

When to stop

Keep it for at least ninety days. That is long enough to see a real direction and short enough that it does not become your identity.

Some women stop after three months because the marriage has turned and they no longer need an instrument. Some stop because they have their answer. Both are good endings.

What I would ask you not to do is keep it for years. A diary is a lamp you carry through a dark stretch. It is not a house to live in.

Write tonight. Four lines. Even if today was nothing.

— *Dede Okeke*

Thirty Prompts For The Nights You Are Stuck

Some nights the four lines will not come, usually because the day was flat or because you are avoiding something. Use one of these instead.

Take one prompt, write three or four sentences, and go to sleep. Do not use more than one in a night — the diary is meant to be short.

About today

- What is the last thing he said to me that was not about a task?
- When did I last hear him laugh, and at what?
- What did I want to say today and did not say?
- What did I do today purely to manage his mood?
- If today repeated for a year, what would I become?
- What was the loneliest moment of today, exactly?

About the pattern

- What am I doing over and over that has never once worked?

- What do I tell other people about my marriage, and how far is it from the truth?
- What excuse have I made for him more than three times this month?
- What have I stopped asking for because I already know the answer?
- When did I last feel like myself in this house?
- What am I waiting for, and what would happen if it never came?

About him

- What season did this start in, and what else was happening in his life then?
- What does he seem lightest about, and where does that happen?
- When did he last ask me a question about my own life?
- What do I think he is ashamed of?
- What would he say if he could say anything without consequence?
- What is one thing he still does that I have stopped noticing?

About me

- What did I want for myself before all of this started?
- Which friendship have I let go quiet, and why?
- What have I stopped doing that I used to love?
- What am I frightened would happen if I said exactly what I feel?
- What would I tell my sister if she described this exact marriage to me?
- What would I do next if I knew I would be alright either way?

About the future

- Where will this marriage be in a year if nothing changes?
- What is the smallest change that would make next week better?
- What am I still hoping for, honestly?
- What would I need to see in six months to know this is worth it?
- What is the one thing I am not letting myself think about?
- If I were being brave rather than careful, what would I do tomorrow?

A NOTE ON THE LAST PROMPT

Many women write nothing for that one, for weeks, and then one night write a full page.

When that night comes, do not act on it immediately, and do not throw it away either. Read it again in seven days. If it still says the same thing when you are calm, it is not a mood. It is the beginning of a decision.

— *Dede Okeke*