

REJECTION

Mariama Ba

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- **17 April 1929 – 17 August 1981**
- **2 French novels were translated into more than a dozen languages.**
- **Born in Dakar, raised as a Muslim.**
- **Her frustration with the fate of African women is expressed in her first novel known in English as ‘So Long Letter.’**



Mariama Bâ

Summary

- The narrator is an Islamic wife who takes care of her household and supports her children's education.
- She is a caring person, who welcomes friends of her daughter, Daba, when they come to study.
- The narrator's husband, Modou, also shows interest in the beautiful girl, Binetou by sometimes taking her home after studying.
- Binetou's mother puts her under pressure to accept the old man's hand in marriage.
- Binetou is not excited about the marriage, but she submits to her mother's plea and agrees.
- The three men break the news to the narrator that her husband has taken a second wife.
- The narrator is shocked about this news but keeps calm.

- Daba is furious and feels betrayed and humiliated by her father and friend.
- After 40 days of mourning for Modou's death, Tamsir (Modou's brother) announces his intention to marry the narrator.
- She, for the first time, does not keep quiet but stands her ground and rejects him in front of the other men.

Title

Rejection means the dismissal or refusal of a proposal or an idea. The story is about the narrator, who at the end of the story, rejects the idea of marrying her late husband's brother. This rejection gives the narrator the power and a voice in society.

Themes

Cultural and religious practices

- The narrator, an Islamic wife, submits to her cultural values.
- At the beginning she enjoys being the only wife, but a crisis erupts when a second wife joins in the marriage without any consultation.
- She hates that she must pretend to be happy and support the young second wife.
- Her feelings are not considered by her in-laws, especially Tamsir, who announces his intention to marry her after the 40th day of mourning her late husband.

Broken relationships

- The narrator's relationship with her husband, Modou, is shaken when he takes a second wife without consulting her.
- The family expects her to accept the new living arrangement of being left alone at times.
- Daba and Binetou's relationship ends when Binetou marries Daba's father and becomes her stepmother.
- The narrator's relationship with her in-laws is shaken when she openly refuses Tamsir's intention to marry her after Modou's passing.

Themes

Betrayal

- The narrator feels betrayed by her life partner, Modou, who takes a second wife without consulting her.
- Daba feels betrayed by her close friend Binetou, who marries Daba's father as his second wife.
- Both the narrator and Daba feel betrayed by Binetou whom they welcomed to their home to do schoolwork.

Gender inequalities

- Modou and Tamsir dominate their marriages. They make decisions without consulting their partners.
- Women in their lives are treated as objects and their opinions do not count.
- Modou shows no respect to girls as he exploits young Binetou by making her his second wife.

Themes

Abuse

- Binetou's mother abuses her daughter when she begs her to marry Modou.
- She sees Binetou's marriage as a life changer and an upgrade in social status.

Poverty

- Binetou is exposed to poverty and ends up getting married to an older man because he can provide for her and her mother.

Setting

The story takes place in Dakar, Senegal in the late 1990's.

Most events take place in the narrator's home where she stays with her family.

Structure and plot development

Exposition

- The narrator introduces the story with 'MY OWN CRISIS CAME' which indicates that she has been living happily at home.
- Binetou, Daba's classmate frequently visits the narrator's house. She is described as young, beautiful, evidently poor and she gets the attention of the narrator's husband.

Structure and plot development

Rising Action

- Binetou's relationship with an old man transforms her into a new person who wears expensive dresses.
- The narrator's daughter shares all her friend's secrets with her mother, including Binetou's crisis of being courted by the 'sugar-daddy'.
- Binetou has no choice but to marry the old man because her mother is desperate for a better life that will be provided by the 'sugar-daddy'.

Climax

- The three men: Tamsir, Mawdo and 'Imam' announce that the narrator's husband has married a new wife, Binetou.
- The narrator and her daughter's worlds are shaken by the news as they have never thought of Binetou's 'sugar-daddy' to be Modou.
- They both feel humiliated and powerless as they experience Modou's rejection.

Structure and plot development

Resolution

- The narrator finally gets a chance to unleash her bottled anger on the 40th day of mourning her late husband, Modou.
- Tamsir's announcement of his intention to marry the narrator makes her speak out.
- She deals with the initial crisis, which is highlighted in the beginning of the story.
- She stops taking the abuse and brings back her power/independence as a woman.
- She decides that no man will ever decide how she must live her life.

Characterisation

The narrator

- **She is supportive.** (She supports her daughter's education.)
- **She is brave/emotionally strong.** (She puts on a brave face though she is disappointed by her husband who marries a younger wife.)
- **She is calm.** (She does not allow her husband's betrayal to get the better of her.)
- **She is defiant/fearless.** (She boldly displays her independence from her in-laws and defies culture by refusing to be inherited by Tamsir.)

Modou

- **He is patriarchal.** (He does not consult his wife before he marries a young girl who is his daughter's classmate.)
- **He is secretive.** (He marries a younger wife without informing his wife, the narrator.)
- **He is cunning/deceitful.** (He uses his money to lure Binetou/the poor girl into marrying him.)

Characterisation

Binetou

- **She is insecure/shy.** (Her poor background makes her feel inferior.)
- **She is untrustworthy.** (She betrays her friend Daba when she does not disclose the name of her 'sugar-daddy'.)
- **She is naive.** (She gives into her mother's manipulation and marries the 'sugar-daddy'.)

Binetou's mother

- **She is manipulative.** (She convinces her daughter to marry an older man to improve her lifestyle.)

Tamsir

- **He is supportive.** (He supports his brother Modou when he remarries.)
- **He is opportunistic.** (He tells the narrator that she is his good luck charm.)
- **He is brave.** (He boldly tells the narrator about his intention to marry her.)

Characterisation

Imam

- **He is brave.** (He is the one who is brave enough to break the news about Modou's wedding to the narrator.)

Daba

- **She is caring.** (She allows her friends to come and study at her home.)
- **She is supportive.** (She supports Binetou when she tells her about her relationship with a 'sugar-daddy'. She seeks advice from her mother on behalf of Binetou.)
- **She is protective.** (She openly shows her fury towards Binetou who marries her father.)

Narrator's point of view

The story is narrated from the first-person point of view in the form of a letter/diary that is written to a friend.

The narrator is an Islamic wife who enjoys her married life at the beginning of the story. She is a round character as she experiences both inner and outer conflicts.

style

Formal register is mostly used in the story.

There is some dialogue in the story to portray the characters feelings/emotions. The dialogue brings the story to life.

The reader gets to know the characters better through what they say.

The use of contractions also brings an informal register, especially when the narrator speaks to her daughter and Aissatou. (the friend to whom she is writing the letter.)



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Diction and figurative language

The writer uses figurative language to emphasize meaning.

simile

‘just like laurels thrown at the feet of my lord and master’ (page 57)

The narrator compares the pride resulting from the success of her children at school to praises given to her husband.

hyperbole

‘I acquiesced under the drops of poison that were burning me’ (page 54)

The narrator exaggerates her accepted shock/heartbreak/pain with the dripping poison that hurts.

Diction and figurative language

metaphor

‘I asked with the cry of a hunted beast’ (page 53)

The narrator’s behaviour resembles how prey would cry for help.

‘the words were glowing embers in his mouth’ (page 53)

The narrator describes the speed of Imam’s explanation of the status quo to get rid of something that causes unbearable pain.

Rhetorical question

‘but what can a child do, faced with a furious mother shouting about her hunger and thirst to live?.’ (page 55)

The narrator questions Binetou’s opinion about the marriage though she knows that Binetou has little say in the matter.

Tone and mood

tone

- ***Gloomy/Downhearted/Depressed***

The narrator uses this tone when the story begins. Her first words in the story 'MY OWN CRISIS CAME....' create a melancholic atmosphere.

- ***Enraged***

Daba is furious at her father Modou who took her close friend and classmate to be his second wife.

mood

- ***SAD/ANGRY/EMOTIONAL (Initially)***
- ***HAPPY/OPTIMISTIC (At the end)***