

# *Summary of “The life Changer by Khadija Abubakar Jalli”*

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## **Introduction**

In the captivating novel "The Life Changer," a web of interconnected stories unfolds, revealing the complexities of human nature and the consequences of our choices. Set against the backdrop of a bustling university town, the narrative follows a diverse cast of characters as they navigate a world filled with moral dilemmas, unexpected encounters, and life-altering moments.

Within this gripping tale, we are introduced to Ummi, a wise and compassionate woman, who becomes the storyteller that binds these narratives together. Through her vivid storytelling, Ummi shares a series of gripping and intertwined accounts, each shedding light on the intricacies of human relationships and the paths we choose to follow.

As the story unfolds, we meet Salim, a young man entangled in the allure of smartphones and social media, whose pursuit of connection leads him down dangerous paths. Salma, on the other hand, battles with academic struggles, pushing her to make desperate choices and engage in acts of deception that jeopardize her future.

Meanwhile, Talle, the enigmatic quiet one, finds himself unexpectedly embroiled in a kidnapping plot orchestrated by Honourable Habib, a man with nefarious intentions. As the threads of these interconnected stories converge, the novel explores themes of trust, redemption, and the power of choices.

Amidst the intricate web of deceit and unexpected twists, the novel also delves into the significance of family bonds and the enduring power of storytelling. Ummi's

role as the storyteller becomes a source of solace and wisdom, as she weaves together narratives of hope, resilience, and ultimately, the pursuit of redemption.

"The life Changer" takes readers on a thrilling journey through the lives of its diverse characters, unraveling their secrets and unveiling the repercussions of their actions. It challenges our understanding of right and wrong, while reminding us of the profound impact our choices can have on ourselves and those around us.

Prepare to be captivated by this thought-provoking and emotionally charged novel that explores the depths of human nature, the complexities of morality, and the possibility of finding redemption in the face of adversity.

## **Chapter by Chapter Summary**

### **Chapter 1**

A family of five is passively waiting for their father to come home from work. While they wait, Bint shares a story with her siblings about an encounter she had with her nosy Social Studies teacher, Mallam Salihu, who always tries to act knowledgeable about various subjects. Bint recounts how she unintentionally embarrassed the teacher in front of their classmates, which made everyone laugh. Mallam Salihu didn't return to the class until after the break.

Umami, Bint's mother, is extremely proud of her daughter, especially her clever handling of the situation. Umami joins the conversation, and just then, Omar happily announces that he has been admitted to Ahmadu Bello University Zaria to study Law at Kongo Campus. The family gathers to celebrate Omar's achievement,

and he proudly talks about overcoming the challenges of the entrance exams and other admission procedures on his own.

Omar proudly reminds his siblings that he passed his WAEC examination on his first try, including English and Mathematics. However, Ummi, his mother, recognizes his naivety and tries to explain to him the life-changing opportunities that come with university admission. Omar then shares that he scored 230 out of 400 in the JAMB exam.

He tells his siblings to address him as "Omar Esquire." Towards the end of the chapter, Ummi emphasizes to her children that admission to university is a transformative experience, just like it was for her. The chapter highlights Ummi's family and introduces Omar's desire to own a smartphone, which motivated him to work hard for his admission. It also reveals the complex relationship between Omar and his sister, Teemah, characterized by conflicts and rivalry. Additionally, it sheds light on the reason why Ummi shared her story with her children.

## **Chapter 2**

In this chapter, Ummi discloses that she hails from Lafayette. She shares that she was admitted to university twenty years ago but got married to her husband before completing her registration. She then proceeds to enlighten Omar about the provocative attire worn by females in the university, emphasizing the importance of her point.

Then, Ummi decides to narrate the story of Salma, a sophisticated young woman, to her children. Ummi then proceeds to describe the freedom and carefree lifestyle

of university students, along with the challenge of distinguishing between teachers and students due to the revealing clothing worn by female students. She also mentions that certain faculties have dress codes in place.

Umami recalls an incident at the Faculty registration office where she met Salma. Salma arrived late for her registration and expressed frustration and irritation with the registration process, accusing the lecturers of corruption and selfishness. A young man engages Salma in a conversation, attempting to correct her negative perception of lecturers. However, Salma continues to criticize and generalize her opinions about lecturers. To everyone's surprise, it is revealed that the young man she has been conversing with is the lecturer in charge of the registration. Salma is embarrassed by this revelation, especially as it is disclosed by John, the cleaner who had kept the students waiting while tidying the office.

After the incident, Umami proceeds to her departmental registration and is the first to be attended to. When she enters the Head of Department's (HOD) office, she feels uncomfortable with the HOD's overly friendly and complimentary behavior towards her. Umami interprets the HOD's actions as him making advances towards her. She requests her matriculation number, UG0001, and tries to excuse herself to use the restroom, but the HOD offers her the toilet in his office. Irritated and angry, Umami leaves the office, wondering about the intentions of the young man with Yoruba tribal marks.

Upon returning home, Umami shares her experience at the HOD's office with her husband. To her surprise, she learns about the friendship and rapport between her husband and Dr. Sam John. Her husband reveals that it was Dr. Sam John who assisted in her admission process.

### **Chapter 3**

Umami proceeds to share the story of "the quiet one," a boy named Talle, which she mentioned in the previous chapter. Talle's birth was a significant event for his parents, who had struggled with infertility for many years. Unfortunately, his mother passed away during childbirth. Growing up, Talle experienced a sense of loneliness, exacerbated by his father and stepmother's inability to conceive. Tragically, both of them died in a road accident.

As a result of his solitary upbringing, Talle earned the nickname "the quiet one." The villagers considered him to be a kind-hearted individual who would never cause harm. Talle found employment as a driver at the Local Government. However, due to his limited social connections in Lafayette and a pressing need for money, Talle confided in a person named Zaki. It was Zaki who proposed the idea of kidnapping a boy and demanding a ransom.

The pair carries out their plan, and Talle confines the boy in his house. Afterwards, Talle goes to the market to purchase groceries, but his usual food order is unexpectedly increased. The attentive market woman notices this change and reports the situation to the District head. While Talle is being interrogated by the District head, a group of policemen suddenly arrives at the palace and arrests Talle on suspicion of kidnapping and extortion. Talle and Zaki are eventually sentenced to several years of imprisonment.

Towards the end of Talle's story, Umami draws a parallel between Talle and Omar, cautioning Omar not to trust anyone as he prepares to enter university. Umami

specifically advises Omar to steer clear of bad company and avoid involvement in Examination Malpractice, commonly referred to as EMAL.

#### **Chapter 4**

In this chapter, Salma's behavior is further explored. She visits Dr. Dabo, her level coordinator, in order to have her forms signed. However, upon seeing Salma, Dr. Dabo loses all the professionalism he had maintained throughout his ten years as a lecturer. He inappropriately propositions Salma for an intimate relationship, but she firmly rejects his advances in a disrespectful manner. Salma arrogantly dismisses his attempt and insults him before leaving his office. Dr. Dabo is left feeling regretful and prays to God for forgiveness, hoping that Salma doesn't report him to higher authorities.

Salma proceeds to complete her hostel registration at Queen Amina Hall and moves into a room shared with three other girls. Initially, Salma is not fond of her roommates, but eventually, they develop a bond and form an intimate relationship they consider as sisterhood. One of her roommates is Tomiwa, a Muslim from Ibadan, Oyo State.

Salma's roommates are described, with each of them having unique characteristics. Ngozi, a Christian from Umunze, Imo State, stands out as the most intelligent and tidy roommate, and her people's specialty is snail cuisine. Ngozi is quiet and exceptionally generous. Another roommate, Ada, is a Christian from Benue State. Salma, on the other hand, hails from the northern region of Nigeria and practices Islam. Despite their diverse backgrounds, the bond between the roommates is strengthened through their shared love for food. Each of them prepares special

dishes from their respective regions, and Ngozi plays a key role in fostering their friendship by consistently sharing her food with the others.

In one particular incident, Salma accepts a ride in a Mercedes Benz from two men named Habib and Labaran. She knowingly puts herself in a potentially dangerous situation but does so with an air of conceit. Salma plans to reject Habib's proposal if he eventually asks her out, viewing it as an opportunity to showcase the caliber of men she has turned down in the past. She believes that such rejections enhance her status, garner recognition, and earn respect from her hostel mates and classmates.

This chapter serves to highlight the diversity within Nigeria, showcasing the unique characteristics of the roommates from different regions of the country living together in peace and harmony. The introduction of various regional delicacies emphasizes the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria's tribes. Additionally, the chapter reveals Salma's vanity and self-centered nature.

### **Chapter 5:**

In this chapter, it is revealed that Salma deceives Habib by giving him Tomiwa's phone number instead of her own. When Habib calls, the roommates encourage Tomiwa to accept the blind date and go out with him. However, Tomiwa's self-assured nature often intimidates potential suitors, making it challenging for her to find a date. Despite initially being skeptical, Tomiwa eventually discloses the phone number swap to Habib.

Surprisingly, Habib still expresses interest in her and goes on to buy gifts for Tomiwa and her roommates. He even gives Tomiwa some money for herself and her roommates, which brings them great joy and happiness.

However, Salma feels betrayed by Tomiwa's acceptance of Habib's advances and accuses her of being deceitful and inconsistent. Ada and Ngozi try to mediate, but the situation escalates into a heated argument. Just as tensions reach their peak, someone knocks on the door, prompting them to realize the foolishness of their quarrel. Not wanting to involve another person in their dispute, they quickly reconcile and settle their differences.

Meanwhile, Salma and her roommates continue to excel in their respective academic departments and prepare for their General Studies papers. They are all high-achieving students, aiming for Second Class Upper honors. However, an unfortunate event occurs that impacts Salma's progress.

## **Chapter 6**

In this chapter, Salma faces difficulties with Moral Philosophy and resorts to cheating during the examination. She seeks assistance from Kola, who initially hesitates but eventually gives her coded answers for the first two questions. However, Salma's cheating is exposed when the invigilator notices her sudden burst of writing after a prolonged period of inactivity.

As a result, Salma is caught and forced to sign the Examination Malpractice (EMAL) form. In the process, she implicates Kola, ultimately leading to his expulsion from the institution as well.

## **Chapter 7:**

In an attempt to improve her academic performance, Salma turns to her friend's lover, Habib, who is a politician, for help in influencing the Examination and Ethics Committee (EMEC). Initially, Habib suggests involving Dr. Debo, but Salma declines the idea and instead proposes bribing the committee members. Habib agrees to provide the money for the bribe, but Salma hesitates due to her involvement with Labaran.

Eventually, Salma agrees to accept the money from Habib and decides to give it to Dr. Kabir, whom she believes to be the chairman of the EMEC. However, she later discovers that Dr. Kabir is an imposter and not a genuine member of the committee. Salma's plan fails, and she must face the consequences of her actions when she appears before the EMEC panel.

## **Chapter 8**

In this chapter, we learn that the laboratory technologist, Mohammed Kabir, is often referred to as "Doctor" because of a nickname he acquired during his time in secondary school. Kabir is a friendly person who has earned the trust of many individuals at the university where he is employed.

When Salma falls victim to a gambler's trick, Labaran seeks the assistance of Zaki to recover the money. Zaki tracks down Kabir, who had won the money from Salma, and manages to retrieve it from him.

Additionally, this chapter provides insight into Zaki's involvement in the kidnapping of Alhaji Adamu's son. Honorable Habib instructed Zaki to carry out the kidnapping, but the operation went awry due to the participation of an inexperienced villager named Talle.

## **Chapter 9**

In this chapter, Ummi shares a story about Salim's encounter with smartphones and social media. Salim engages with a girl named Natasha online and agrees to meet her late at night, unaware that it is a trap set by kidnappers and robbers. Fortunately, Salim manages to escape the dangerous situation through what seems like divine intervention.

Later on, Salim connects with another girl through social media and asks his friend Lawal to accompany him to their meeting. However, Lawal declines the request, leaving Salim disappointed when he discovers that the girl is not as physically attractive as he had anticipated.

Meanwhile, Ummi's children eagerly await their father's return, and Ummi continues to captivate them with her storytelling.

## **Themes**

**1. Family dynamics:** The data mentions Ummi's anticipation of her husband's arrival, highlighting the excitement and closeness within the family as they eagerly await his return. Additionally, Ummi shares stories with her children, emphasizing the role of storytelling in passing down wisdom and creating a sense of connection within the family. The pride parents feel for their children's accomplishments. The theme explores the bonds, support, and love within a family unit.

**2. Educational pursuits:** The theme of educational pursuits is evident through various elements such as admissions processes, academic achievements, and challenges faced by students. It touches upon the importance of hard work, overcoming obstacles, and the transformative power of education in shaping individuals' lives. The novel reveals Omar's desire to own a smartphone and how it motivates him to work hard for his admission into university. It also showcases Ummi's own experience of gaining admission and how it changed her life. These examples emphasize the importance of education and the transformative impact it can have on individuals and their future opportunities.

**3. Relationships:** The novel presents different types of relationships, including siblings, friends, and romantic interests. It delves into the complexities of these relationships, showcasing moments of support, conflict, trust, and betrayal. The theme explores the dynamics of human connections and the impact they can have on personal growth and decision-making.

It also presents the relationship between Omar and his siblings, highlighting their cat and dog dynamic. It also depicts Ummi's surprise upon learning about her husband's friendship with Dr. Sam John, revealing the complexities of relationships and the discovery of unexpected connections. The interactions between characters showcase both the support and conflicts that can arise within relationships.

**4. Cultural diversity:** The data mentions the different roommates in Salma's hostel, representing diverse cultural backgrounds from various regions of Nigeria. It highlights their unique delicacies and customs, emphasizing the cultural diversity within the country.

**5. Moral dilemmas:** The novel touches upon moral dilemmas faced by individuals, such as the temptation to cheat in exams or engage in unethical behavior. It explores the internal struggles, consequences, and moral growth that can arise from making difficult choices.

It explores Salma's moral dilemma as she contemplates cheating during her examination. It reveals her decision to copy answers from a note, leading to the discovery of her actions and subsequent signing of the Examination Malpractice form. This example highlights the moral struggles individuals may face and the potential consequences of unethical behavior.

**6. Consequences of actions:** The theme of consequences emphasizes the outcomes that result from the characters' choices and actions. It highlights how decisions made by individuals can have both positive and negative repercussions, shaping their experiences and influencing their future paths.

Like in the case of Salma's actions when her plan to influence the Examination and Ethics Committee fails, resulting in facing the consequences of her actions at the EMEC panel. It showcases how her choices have led to negative outcomes and the importance of considering the repercussions of one's decisions.

## **Notable Characters in the Novel**

**Umami Ahmed** - The central character and narrator of the novel, "The Life Changer." Umami's journey forms the foundation of the story as she takes on the role of a teacher and a mother while sharing her experiences with her children. She enters into a marriage with Mr. Ahmed before pursuing her university education, fulfilling her father's condition.

**Bint** - A five-year-old member of the Ahmed family and the darling of the household. Bint is portrayed as a brilliant and inquisitive child, always seeking knowledge and asking thought-provoking questions. In one instance, she impresses her French teacher, Mallam Salihu, by answering his question but catches him off guard with her own challenging question, leaving him embarrassed and unable to respond.

**3. Mallam Salihu** - An intrusive social studies teacher at Bint's school. He is known for his belief that he possesses knowledge in various subjects, particularly French. However, his self-proclaimed expertise is challenged when Bint poses a question to him in French, leaving him unable to provide an answer. This incident becomes a source of ridicule for Mallam Salihu in front of the class.

**4. Jemila** - The third child and second daughter of the Ahmed family. Further details about Jemila's role and characteristics are not provided in the available data.

**5. Teemah** - The second child and eldest daughter of the Ahmed family. No additional information is provided about Teemah's specific traits or involvement in the story.

**6. Omar** - Ummi's eldest child and only son, aged eighteen. He is known for his impeccable grooming and cleanliness. Omar's academic achievements are remarkable, as he describes his performance in the SSCE (Senior School Certificate Examination) as outstanding. He also successfully passed his JAMB (Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board) examination and secured admission into Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria to pursue a degree in Law.

**7. Talle** - Given the name Talle due to the unfortunate circumstance of his mother's death shortly after his birth. However, he is primarily known as "the quiet one" because of his naturally reserved and introverted personality, evident even during his childhood. Talle is a native of Lafayette. Tragedy strikes when both his father and stepmother perish in a tragic car accident when Talle is just twenty years old, further deepening his solitude. Talle becomes entangled in a criminal plot with Zaki, as they conspire to kidnap a young boy and demand a ransom from his father. Their actions lead to their subsequent conviction and imprisonment with hard labor for several years.

**11. Ngozi** - Ngozi, Salma's roommate, hails from Umunze in Imo State. She possesses a quiet and reserved demeanor, often keeping to herself. However, she

exhibits a remarkable level of generosity, never cooking for herself alone and always sharing her meals with others.

**12. Habib** - Habib is a prominent politician who encounters Salma alongside his friend Labaran in Kwangila. They offer Salma a ride to the university campus, setting in motion a series of events that intertwine their lives.

**13. Labaran** - Labaran is a childhood friend of Honourable Habib and also serves as his loyal driver. Despite choosing a different path by attending driving school instead of pursuing higher education like Habib, Labaran supports his friend and shows kindness to him. Habib reciprocates by appointing Labaran as his driver when he enters the political sphere.

**14. Zaki** - Zaki is the mastermind behind the plan to kidnap a boy and extort money from his parents. He convinces Talle to participate in the sinister scheme, knowing that Talle is in need of financial assistance.

**15. Dr. Samuel Johnson** - Dr. Samuel Johnson is a young lecturer with distinct tribal marks that create confusion about his ethnic background, leading to speculation whether he is from the Igala or Yoruba tribe. He holds the position of Head of Department (HOD) in Umami's department and shares a close friendship with Umami's husband. Dr. Samuel Johnson played a crucial role in helping Umami gain admission into the university.

**16. Dr. Dabo** is a lecturer in Ahmad Bello University, Zaria who erotically approached Salma in his office when Salma came for her registration. This caused Salma to insult Dr Dabo before leaving his office.

**17. Hakimi** - Hakimi holds the esteemed position of district head in the Lafayette community. Talle's arrest takes place within the confines of his palace, as the police apprehend Talle for his involvement in criminal activities.

**18. Kolawole Abdul** - Kolawole Abdul is a fellow student in Salma's course. Under pressure during their final exam for Moral Philosophy, Salma coerces him into providing her with coded answers. Despite being brilliant and intelligent, Kolawole is implicated by Salma during the investigation into exam malpractice, leading to his expulsion from the university.

**19. Mohammad Kabir** - Employed as an imposter, Mohammad Kabir assumes the identity of Dr. Kabir, falsely presenting himself as a lecturer and the chairman of the Examination Malpractice and Ethics Committee (EMEC). However, he has no association with the university and holds no official position.

**20. Lawal** - Lawal is Salim's friend who declines to accompany him when meeting his newfound love interest on social media. This girl, turns out to be completely different from her appearance in the pictures displayed on her profile, disappointing Salim.