

# Birdwoman

Felicity, the protagonist of *Birdwoman*, is introduced as a woman whose life has been marked by unhappiness from birth. Conceived out of wedlock, she grew up in a religious household where her parents' guilt manifested in strict piety and financial deprivation. Her childhood was further marred by abuse from an older cousin, and even after escaping her family at nineteen by stealing money, her discontent persisted. Despite building a successful tailoring business through shrewdness—poaching skilled tailors from her former employer—Felicity remains emotionally unfulfilled, her life defined by a lingering sense of being an unwanted burden.

Now forty-five, Felicity is described as physically imposing yet perpetually grim, her demeanor reflecting her inner turmoil. Her unmarried status becomes a subject of speculation among her employees, who assume a man might bring her happiness, though Felicity herself seems indifferent to relationships. On her birthday, a day she keeps secret, she indulges in small, private rebellions—like wearing a revealing dress or eating ice cream alone—highlighting her isolation and unresolved longing for transformation. These acts underscore her quiet desperation, as she remains trapped in a life that feels heavy and unchangeable.

While running an errand in Agege Market, Felicity encounters a crowd gathered around a self-proclaimed magician named Ayao. Initially dismissive, she is drawn back by the promise of magic, a fleeting spark of curiosity breaking through her cynicism. Ayao, a shabbily dressed but charismatic figure, performs card tricks before announcing his grand finale: a volunteer will fly. The crowd recoils, but Felicity, sensing a performative ruse, steps forward. Her decision surprises onlookers, hinting at a latent yearning for escape—or perhaps a willingness to disrupt the monotony of her existence.

The chapter ends with Felicity volunteering, a moment charged with quiet significance. Her action suggests a rare openness to the improbable, a departure from her usual guardedness. Whether Ayao's magic is real or a con remains unclear, but Felicity's participation symbolizes a fleeting hope—or a final act of defiance against a life that has offered her little joy. The scene leaves readers questioning whether this encounter might catalyze a change in her otherwise unyielding unhappiness.