

A person with long hair, wearing a dark jacket, is seen from behind, standing in a library. They are looking at a bookshelf filled with books. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, golden-brown color palette. The text 'BECAUSE OF ANN' is overlaid in large, bold, red letters.

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Chapter 1

A newbie gets into trouble.

According to the Army man, *who nor go, nor go know.*

The evening sun was shining like it will be its last time but that seemed to be the least of the students' worries. There has been this rumour that without school ID card, students won't be allowed to write their first semester exam.

As a new student who doesn't even know what a higher institution exam looks like and was preparing to take his first one, it was not a time to decide whether such statements are true or false.

The main problem of every student was how to go get their school ID cards while preparing for their exams. I was not an exception. I hate it when evil befalls me especially when a warning has been made about such evil. On such occasions, I see myself as a coward.

Before I get lost, let me formally introduce you to this promising story, Because of Ann. Get ready we are going a long way. It's smooth and steady.

Let's continue...

It was just 3 weeks before the exam started. The problem about this ID card collection of a thing is just the queue there and that's even when you have your school fees receipt ready.

I had less problem compared to people who still had a mountain called 'Mount bursary' to climb.

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Men, collecting any receipt from bursary is harder than a 4 unit course exam.

Having had my school fees receipt ready, I made up my mind to go battle with the queue mostly made up of Mass Com and Business Admin students. I could have gone as early as 7am, but that was the time we start lectures, Monday to Friday. Being an engineering student in a polytechnic is too demanding but we had to bear it.

That Wednesday, I decided that the next day being a Thursday, I will go to the ID card centre to collect my own by 1pm when we shall be having a free period. I knew without being told that I'll meet a queue there but I had to try my luck first.

We attended a lecture by 3pm and dismissed by 5pm. The evening sun was still very bright. I was tired already for the day. Walking under the sun to the school gate was now a big problem but I had no option.

Together with my friends, we started the journey. It didn't look like the best of days. Looking at the students going home, all were quiet and none was smiling. This made me laugh.

Finally, I got home at about 15 minutes past 6. As a first year student just in his first semester, I was one of those students who were afraid of being withdrawn. With regards to that, it doesn't matter how hard the day has been - when I got home, I must read.

As stressful as the day was, all I could do was boil noodles and go into the bathroom to wash my skin. I finished with the bathroom and ate my dinner.

After eating, I picked up my phone and scrolled through Facebook for about 30 minutes. I wasn't even comfortable chatting. My mind was just pushing me to go and read even when I didn't want to.

That night, I slept off while reading.

The next morning brought a Thursday, a day that made a mark in my life.

It was one of those bright days that makes me sing my primary school matching song sincerely,

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“The day is bright;

It's bright and fair;

o happy day;

a day of joy;

the day is bright;

it's bright and fair;

o happy day of joy;

mama jollof rice.”

I just had this feeling it was going to be a day and not just a day. I don't know if you got any meaning from the sentence.

It was already a routine - wake up at 5:30am, get to school before 7:15am. This bright Thursday was not an exception. I got to school around 6:58pm,

I was the first person to get to the hall. I plugged my ear piece into my phone and started playing Sinach's worship songs.

The next 15 minutes saw a lot of students in the hall. At 8am, the lecturer came, talked about his textbook and CA (Continuous Assessment) in regards to the forthcoming exam and then left.

I didn't bother to wonder why he didn't lecture us. Most of the lecturers claim that they've finished their outline so when any of them doesn't come to class, we conclude that he or she has finished his/her course outline.

I think I have to introduce myself now. My name has always been Kelvin. A student of Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi Uku in his first year and first semester studying Electrical Engineering. This story wasn't written in 2018 though – It was written some the previous year.

I think that would be all for now. As we continue, you will find out more things yourself.

Let's continue...

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Clock continued ticking as time went by. After two other lectures, it was finally 1pm, our free period. A time I've been waiting for or let me say a time that has been waiting for me.

With my ear piece plugged to my ear, I left the engineering complex and bounced towards Maths and Stat department. Actually, the ID card centre was the block separating Maths and Stat block from Computer Science block.

Within 5 minutes, I got to my destination. As expected, there were already hundreds of students making noise there in the name of queue.

There was no definite line, everybody was scattered. I knew the place was going to be like that but what I didn't know was that I was going to enter trouble.

In an attempt to settle in the crowd, I pulled off my ear piece. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I don't know, I saw a girl ranting.

She was shouting at this guy for pushing her in an argument of whether she was in the queue before him or not.

As devil will always be devil, I didn't know when I shouted

'slap am slap am'.

It was one of these comments we throw in class or football centres and nobody will take it seriously.

I was perplexed when from nowhere somebody appeared in my front barking

'Who dey say make she slap me?'

'Who dey say make she slap me?'

'The person dey crase?'

'Una want graduate before time?'

'You know who I be?'

I was confused, I didn't see such coming. For about 30 seconds, I didn't know what to say or do. All the courage that I had, disappeared. Just when I needed them.

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You know *na*, as it will always be in Nigeria, at that moment, everybody was looking at me and the girl.

For the first time, I looked at the girl. She had a good stature meaning she should be 23 or 24. She was wearing a tight jean with a yellow top. My belief was that she can't beat me but I was afraid of the possibility that she could be a cultist.

I was afraid of ruining my life in school by just the first semester. But then, I had to do something. I was almost being engulfed in the presence of what the bible calls multitude. Everyone was already waiting for me to say something; some people were already disappointed in me.

I don't know if they were expecting me to slap the girl and start beating her up.

In the midst of fear and courage: also considering that empty vessels make the loudest noise, I managed to say something

'nawa for you o, see person wey two of una dey quarrel for that side abi na me push you?'

'na im go make you tell am make he slap me?' she replied.

'na im make you dey talk say you go pursue me for school too, shey na you be Rector?'

'uya try me first', she said as she walked back to stand by the entrance to the office and stopped talking.

The decorum in the place expired and people started murmuring. Some were laughing at the girl while others were laughing at me.

Before much could happen, one of the security men came out from the office holding a camera.

'Uya let's start snapping. Maintain your queue. Everybody

will snap' the man announced.

Before the man could finish the announcement, everybody was already rushing like people living in Lagos. As a sharp, fast and slim guy, I darted into the middle of two girls who already had secured a position for themselves.

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As expected, the girl at my back quarrelled

'Abeg comot for my front'

'I beg na, nor be only me enter? E go still reach you, shey all of us be Christians', I begged her.

The girl laughingly replied

'Shey e reach me now, you wan get mouth, when that girl hold you, you nor see mouth talk o'

Me: Ahhh, somebody wey I tell one thing, she keep quiet.

I was already winning the argument when the girl in my front made things worse.

'Who you tell one thing? You for talk na, make she beat you for here', the girl said.

I was ashamed hearing what people had been thinking about me but the mouth was there so I had to use it to defend myself.

Me: So if them tell you say that girl go beat me, you go gree?

Girl1: Why she nor go gree, you get power?

Me: I don suffer. Because you dey see me like this?

Girl2: Nor worry, I know the kind power wey you get.

The two girls laughed.

I wanted to ask them why they were laughing but I knew the answer won't be nice so I held my peace.

The queue had balanced and snapping of passport was already in progress. I was waiting patiently and foolishly for it to get to my turn. Foolish in the sense that I needed to feel a form before even thinking of joining the line. Thank God for the girl in my front (girl 2). She turned facing me and asked

'Have you filled your form?'

Me: Ahhh? Which form?

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Girl2: See you o, ID card form *na*.

Me: *I never hear that one before o.*

Girl1: You can't be serious. *Why you come dey waste your time for here?*

Me: *Abeg where them dey collect the form?*

Girl2: *Go that window.*

Me: *Them dey collect money?*

Girl2: No.

Girl1: *Nor worry make I go bring am for you.*

The girl left my back after telling people that she was going to get something so they don't deny her of her position in the queue.

As life could be so somehow, I had met the girl standing in front of me at the school market the previous day in a business centre, where she photocopied something for me but here she was mocking me probably because she didn't recognise me. I had to remind her. I called for her attention and when I got it, I asked her

'*Shey you didn't remember me?*'

Girl2: Remember you? Have we met before?

Me: Yeah. Just yesterday.

Girl2: Where?

Me: School market

Girl2: Did I even go to that market throughout this week?

Me: *Ahhh, you dey lie jhor.*

Girl2: Why should I lie? Maybe you met another person o, not me.

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Before we could argue more, the other girl returned with a small piece of paper which had space for name, department, level and mat number. I filled my own with style and listened as the first girl commented, 'Nice handwriting.'

I didn't bother to say anything. I just smiled inside. After filling the small form, I was as safe as every other person that had the paper so I began wondering again about the girl standing in front of me trying to tell me she wasn't the person I saw yesterday.

I couldn't take it so I excused myself from the queue since it won't be my turn even in the next 20 minutes. I rushed to the market to check if the other girl was by any chance still in the market.

I almost shouted when the girl saw me and smiled, a sign of, 'Welcome to our shop, what can we do for you?'

I didn't know what to say to her because I didn't want to buy or photocopy anything. So that I don't look foolish, I had to ask her about something I didn't even need after exchanging pleasantries with her.

Me: Can you form an attestation letter for somebody?

Girl: Yes *na*.

Me: *okay, e get person wey I wan bring on Monday.*

Girl: No problem.

Me: *Wait o, shebi you tell me yesterday say you be from Ukwani?*

Girl: Yes *na*. *Why you dey ask?*

Me: *Nothing o. You get sister for this school?*

Girl: *No. Wetin happen na?*

Me: Just wait, *I dey come.*

I ran back to the ID card centre. With a lot of things running through my mind. Can human being be this double?

After a few minutes' walk, I got to my destination.

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I was shocked when I got back to my position and met only the first girl.

Ahhh, I didn't know when I asked the first girl,

'Where is your friend?'

'*Look at her coming*, she went to receive call', she answered pointing at her direction.

I looked at the direction of her pointing finger and truly, she was coming. I was relieved. I was already thinking she was a ghost and has vanished.

Immediately she found her way into the queue, I asked her,

'Please where are you from?'

'Edo State', she replied.

'So you mean you don't have any sister in this school?', I asked again.

'No, I don't. Hope there's no problem?', she said.

Me: No. No problem, just that there's this girl I met at market, two of you look exactly the same.

Same height, same skin colour, same body size (looking like Aguero - short and full-bodied), the same hair style (round cut), I mean; there's just little or no difference. If there's any, it should be in their character.

Girl2: Hmmm, I don't have any relation in this school *self*.

Me: God is really wonderful.

The other girl didn't bother to say anything. I know they thought I was joking. Just when I wanted to tell them to follow me to go and see things for themselves, I noticed that it was just five more persons before it gets to us so I allowed the matter sleep.

Finally, it got to our turn and we were snapped and we submitted our forms and waited like every other person.

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During our time of wait, all we did was discuss about the difficulties in the various branches of the school, from Management to Security, teaching to non-teaching staff.

After about 30 minutes, our names were called consecutively. We went into the hall and verified our names.

Three different women attended to the three of us simultaneously.

We were asked to check if our names and Mat Numbers were correct. After we certified that it was correct, we were asked to select our passport from hundreds of passports showing on the monitors. It didn't take me time to see mine. The pictures were cropped and added to the files then we were asked to sign.

After that, we were asked to wait outside for collection of the ID card and other people were called inside.

As we went outside, I checked my time and it was 3:28pm already. I couldn't leave the place at such moment to go for lecture so I decided to let the lecture go.

As time passed, we waited patiently and watched as people did the things we've done already. Some were filling forms, others were taking passports while some were inside signing and the lucky ones were collecting their ID cards.

There were those guys too who came with their course mates and all they could do was make noise and argue about Chelsea and Man Utd.

Another corner had some groups of girls talking in codes that could be understood by only them.

I was just with two girls whose names I didn't even know.

Soon, it was 4pm. The next thing we heard was an announcement from the man taking the passport photographs,

'Hello everybody, we have closed for the day. Those of you who have signed already, come by 9am to collect it tomorrow and let your 9am be 9am'.

Trust students, the announcement was received with shouts and insults but they were mere noise-there was nothing we could do.

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My only problem with the development was that I was going to miss another lecture because of an ID card I never knew will be less useful until I got it.

I was about to start voicing my frustration but my girls noticed it through the look on my face and intervened.

Girl1: *Ehya, Kelvin sorry. I know say you wan do them wetin you do that girl but just leave them.*

I wanted to argue with her but how she managed to know my name was more important to me. I looked at myself to check if there was any part of me that had my name written on it but found none.

Me: *How you take know my name?*

Girl1: *E dey your face na.*

Me: *I dey serious jhor.*

Girl2: Don't mind her. She saw you filling your form.

Me: Okay! I think I've been cheated here.

Girl2: Not so. My name is Joy.

Me: Wow. Joy of the Lord.

(I got her smiling)

Me: (to the first girl) Should I beg for your name?

Girl1: *Yes na, abi I nor reach?*

Me: *Sorry, you reach. I beg, please.*

Girl1: Don't mind me o. My name is Ann.

Me: Ahhh! What is it about you girls and three letter words? I think you had problem with spelling back in primary school.

The two of them were laughing sheepishly. By this time, many people have left the centre. Only people who had people to talk to like me were still seen around. Plus,

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those who were too frustrated to go home. My brother if anybody tells that you higher institution is easy, don't believe them o.

Let me continue.

Me: Okay girls, let me formally introduce myself. My name is Kelvin. Department of Electrical Engineering.

Ann: If I didn't see you writing it in your form, I would have doubted.

Me: Why?

Ann: You don't look like them.

Me: I don't understand.

Ann: You talk differently. You're even too lazy for heavy works.

Joy: Ahhh, *you know the guy before?*

Me: *I tire o.*

Ann: (laughing) I'm sorry. Forgive my mouth, you're strong.

Me: *Leave me jhor.* Just tell me what I want to hear.

Joy: Okay, I'm a Business Admin student.

Ann: Wow, me, Mass Communication.

Joy: (Smiling) Must you use the innocent guy for rehearsal?

Ann: I've apologised.

Me: It's okay. We have to part ways now to meet again tomorrow.

Joy: what time are we coming?

Me: You two should tell me when I will meet you here.

Ann: Or when three of us will meet here.

Me: I will come to meet you both *na.*

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Joy: Young man, today is my first day of meeting Ann.

Me: (Surprised) Are you serious?

Ann: Yeah. That's what ID centre gave to us today.

We all smiled.

Ann: (To me) Please where is your phone?

Me: I don't have card o.

Ann: *But you get flashing.*

Me: Yeah.

Ann: *Uya* give me.

I brought out my *Nokia touch* and gave it to her. I wasn't expecting her to say something about my phone and as expected, she said nothing. How can she blab about my phone? A good percentage of Nigerian youths who own a *Nokia touch* phone do have another phone. Even though she didn't know whether I had or not, she shut her mouth.

We were already walking out of the centre slowly while talking. Ann gave me back my phone. 'That's my number, I will call you later,' she said.

I was happy with her attitude. Most girls today will think it the other way round, calling themselves 'cheap' which is wrong. That is not the definition of cheapness, it is just being free with human kind.

I saved the number immediately to avoid stories. I wanted Joy's number too but since she didn't start it after what Ann did, asking her for it may make somebody else feel somehow. (I hope you understand). So I let it be a game for another day.

After another 120 seconds together, we parted ways. I went straight to my department just to meet people making noise. I didn't need to ask if the Lecturer came to class because from all indications, he didn't. Most people were not even around which meant that they've gone home.

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I entered the class and sat down, to feel involved at least. The next 45 minutes saw me home. Time check, it was 5:15pm. On getting home, I followed my normal routine; bath, eat and read/play.

Don't worry, I'm not a bookworm, I only read on weekdays. It's just assignments that I manage to do on Saturdays and Sundays.

Tuesdays and Wednesdays that bring Champions League or Midweek football, I only read when I come back, maybe for 30 minutes or less/more.

Let's continue.

After eating, I set my table and started my read, play game; music and chat business.

Just 30 minutes into my book, my phone started ringing. It was Ann. I had even forgotten about her. I can be that serious. I kept my composure before I answered the call. It was just a normal call; how are you, how was your day, have you eaten, what are you doing, have a good night. Before she ended the call, she charged me to get to the ID card centre before 8am. I assured her I will get to the place before her; she chuckled and said okay before ending the call.

Because of how tough the day was, I decided to sleep as early as 10pm. I needed to wake by 6am. Without starving my eyes. So I set a 6:00am alarm and jumped unto my bed.

After some hours, I saw myself with Ann and Joy.

At the ID card centre, we were waiting for our cards. Others waiting for their other things when a woman, the leader of the ID card unit came out and announced that she wants somebody to coordinate small crowd. The announcement didn't concern me so I didn't make any move but more like jokingly, Joy told me to show them I'm interested.

I was just smiling when Ann said I'm wasting time. Without thinking, I raised up my hand and Ann shouted

'look at the coordinator here'

'he will be our coordinator'

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My hand was still up when Joy advised, shout it yourself so that they will know you're serious.

That was how I started shouting

'I will be the leader'

'I will be the coordinator'

'Choose me'

'Choose me'.

For a moment, I stopped announcing and observed the crowd. We were about 5 people showing interest before but we were now just two. The place became less noisy and some people were hailing a guy. If it was devil, the devil worked hard that day. I was pushed to continue my announcement

'I want to be the leader. I want to be the leader'

I wasn't able to make another shout before a group of roughly counting; 8 boys came to meet me. No pleasantries, nothing. The next thing I heard was

'You nor get respect abi?'

I needed no soothsayer to tell me I've fallen into the hands of AS Roma players (cultists, lol).

Anybody who has experienced being bullied will know that you are not given a chance to say anything.

Before I could ask them what I did, I was given dirty slap to keep for them. I felt embarrassed. The embarrassment in me flew away when my leg was cleared and I was made to sit on the ground. What was more important to me was how to beg them to let me go but the problem is that they won't let me talk. At any attempt to say something, they would send a punch at me. I felt pity for my innocent self. Some other people were there but all I was seeing was myself and the AS Roma players (lol, AS Roma 3-0 Chelsea). My eyes started seeing other people when I heard Ann begging the guys. They threatened to beat her if she doesn't run out of the place. I was expecting her to run but instead, Joy joined her in the plea.

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Some helpless people were already sneaking out of the scene. At such situations, no one will come to your rescue, not even those old security men that have their families to care for. Anybody who understands these parts will know that they were employed to open and close gate and not to defend students' life.

Everything was happening so fast and still looked like no one was noticing anything.

When Joy and Ann refused to leave, they were both given a share of the slap I received and tears rolled down their cheeks.

When the guys felt they've done enough, they stood aside and one guy on Arsenal jersey then said to me

'Next time, dey look face before you lead. Na we be leaders for this school. Anywhere wey you see us, nor near there.'

‘Yes Sir, I replied.’

They were about leaving when one of them looking unhealthy came back and said to Joy

'O girl, I like that your phone, uya bring am sharp sharp'.

After seconds of contemplation, Joy lifted her hand to give the guy the phone. I dragged the phone from her.

The guy feeling challenged quickly brought out a knife and raised his hand to attack me. I've closed my eyes waiting for the worse to happen. After 2 seconds, I felt nothing so I opened my eyes only to see the guy lying flat on the ground.

The only question in my mind was 'what happened?' but things were too fast for me. I raised my face and saw my course rep with a wood.

Immediately, I woke up from my sleep. I was relieved to find out it was a dream. But again, I was worried it was a tough dream, let me not use the word bad because I was at least not defeated home and away.

I stretched my hand to the corner of my bed in search of my phone. I picked it up and checked the time; it was 4:55am. I tried to go back to sleep but it wasn't coming. The dream was that serious.

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At 5:15am, I gave up trying to sleep. I switched on my second phone and started playing music while I sat down to plan my day. It was a Friday and the only day we don't do much in our department. We do just one departmental course in the morning, then a practical class and one boring machine engine course and we retire for the day.

I agreed I may end up missing the first lecture and wished if the lecturer comes, he should not teach anything new.

As early as 5:40am, I started cooking. Maybe I will say the day was building itself. By 6am., I decided to sweep the compound since I had time.

By 6:30am, I was already set for school. It was a Friday so I put on my favourite black plain trouser and a native shirt to go with it.

You know in Nigeria, unconstitutional and un-written laws are more respected than constitutional laws.

Every Friday, native. And 80 percent of students and even lecturers in all Nigerian schools, don't joke with that. Some of our organisations even do it. But simple law, 'nobody should come late,' will be poorly adhered to.

Make una dey do.

Let's continue.

I got to school sometime around 7:10am. I met few guys in class and we exchanged normal greetings. I waited till 7:30 and being that there was no sight of our lecturer (it's normal when semester is ending) I decided to go to ID card centre. At least, I will beat Ann to first position.

I carried my bag and happily bounced to the centre. On my way, the thought of the dream I had enveloped me. I was afraid a bit.

For the first time, I decided to pray in my mind about the dream. I was still praying when I sighted our lecturer for the morning driving towards our complex. He saw me and waved me to come to class. Even though I was going somewhere important, missing that class may mean something else to the young man so I turned back to at least go and show my face to him in class.

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I got to class first before him and took a seat. This was how the man entered class and started writing questions on the board. Just like that, test commenced in the name of quiz.

Till today, I don't still know the difference between test and quiz. Nigerian schools can be confusing at times.

The questions were no joke. Just four questions, calculation but you needed to apply all you have in your head to bring out something. So it was a problem for those who keep nothing in their head other than Wizkid and Olamide's songs.

It was those questions, the examiner knows that his answer is to be in the range of 1 to 5. So when you solve and get 200, you just start crying.

After about 40 minutes, nobody submitted, the lecturer announced 'pens up'.

In my country, it is when they shout pens up that somebody who has been sitting for 2 hours without writing anything will see what to write. I call it inspiration. In football, we call it last minute winner.

The day wasn't an exception. People started rushing to write what they could not write in 40 minutes. The man succeeded in collecting the scripts and calming the class. He then announced to us that we should expect such questions in exam.

He spent time to tell us a guide to solving the questions. *Eh!* Come and calculate circuit questions when you don't know the rule of series and parallel connection.

He carried the scripts and left announcing to us that he will still have a class with us under probability.

Immediately he left, I checked my time and it was 8:40am, already. I first thanked God that I didn't miss such a moment and then blamed hell for being second to Ann.

Without wasting time, I carried my bag and transported myself to the ID card centre. As usual, there was a crowd there. The announcement *abi* rumour of 'No ID card, No Exam' probably went round the whole school. I didn't know what to do or ask. I was being careful to avoid the live show of my midnight dream. I was as confused as a defender dribbled by Anthony Martial. God being kind, my eye met with Ann's and I noticed she's been looking at me since roaming about. She

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was inside the hall already. She called me to come inside. I looked left and right before accepting the offer. I walked to the door in humility. Just getting to the entrance, one devil's agent quarrelled,

'Where you dey go? We wey dey outside, we be mumu?'

I had no answer to her question but Ann was there to intervene.

‘He is here for collection,’ she answered.

That simple answer saved me some stress and problem. Ignorance is really a disease. How would I have known that that is what she wanted to hear.

I walked inside and Ann directed me to a woman. I greeted the woman and she gave my loads of ID card to take mine. It was easy for me to find. Ann later told me she was the one that kept it on top. The woman asked for my school fees receipt and I gave it to her and she stamped and signed on it. This way, nobody will collect two times without being noticed.

I thought it was over but Ann told me we still needed to collect Admission letter from the next office. We went inside only to be told it is not ready that we need to come by Monday.

Wetin concern me. The ID was my main concern and I've gotten it.

We stepped outside of the hall to meet the crowd outside. I asked her if she did see or hear from Joy but she said no. She was already on me for coming late when Joy appeared looking stylish. There's something special about Joy. *The girl just fine like say na fine she come read for school.* There was a break in my voice when I wanted to answer her greeting. Without wasting time, we led her inside to go and collect her ID card. With ease too, she collected it.

Okay na, just for us to leave the premises, *kasala* The woman who attended to us started shouting that her phone has been stolen stressing that the phone was on her table before we came.

In my mind, *ah ah, wetin this woman dey try talk?* With style, I searched my pocket to confirm that it didn't enter by any means. Good enough, it wasn't in my pocket. I looked at Ann and Joy, they looked back to my eye then I said to them

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'Wetin this woman dey try talk?'

They looked as embarrassed as I did. Before we could make any move, students who were waiting to be attended to, took over the case.

In life, people will do anything to look good to other people.

Today, we were the ones they would use to be attended to fast.

About four guys blocked our way as the woman continued shouting. Everyone was concentrated on us. I was ashamed because as the only guy in the group, I knew I was the major suspect.

The woman stood up from her seat and came to meet us. She begged us to give her her phone that she bought the phone just two weeks ago. I was speechless and was just looking at them like a fool. I didn't need to start shouting because if I trust myself, I can't trust the girls. I was 80% sure it wasn't them but in life, people can do anything.

Being annoyed by how silent we were, the woman ordered the boys to search us. I stopped them from searching me and searched myself instead, emptying and unfolding the lining of my pocket. They were convinced that even though I was with the phone, it wasn't in my pocket. People kept looking at me as the guys were about searching the girls.

A girl from the crowd said it was not proper for guys to search a girl's bag. On hearing this, the guys stepped aside. The woman without wasting time decided to do the Job by herself. She first dragged Ann's bag and began searching. The speed of my heart beat increased.

After some seconds of vigorous search, the woman dropped the bag on the floor and collected Joy's own. I was still waiting for the worst to happen at the same time praying it should not happen.

The relief came when the woman dropped the bag on the floor too out of frustration. I was thinking it was over until she said

'I'm very sure they are not smart enough to have switched off the phone already, somebody should dial my number'.

KELVIN OSSAI

Immediately, one of the guys guiding us volunteered his phone. There is one thing about students; they support fellow students at all the time but not when he steals.

The woman typed and dialled her number and behold, the phone started ringing.

Hmmm, do you know where the phone was ringing from?

My pocket. Lol.

It's a joke. If the phone rang from my pocket, I won't be healthy enough to write this story this day.

The phone was ringing from her handbag kept close to the foot of her chair. She hurriedly went to check it and truly, her phone was there. A great boo followed. Some mouths were on the woman, others were saying how lucky we are while few with soft minds started apologizing to us.

Without saying anything, I gave the guys guarding us a dirty look and they gave way for us. I looked at Ann and Joy and they did same to me, then I said to them

'Let's leave this place'.

Being good girls, they followed me without saying anything. With what I know about human beings, I know some people were calling us 'strong' for not reacting while others will be calling us 'weak'.

We just managed to find our way out of the crowd heading out of the premises. Before we could know it, Joy turned back without saying anything and started walking back to the centre. I had no idea what she was up to, so together with Ann, I stood and watched.

Before Joy could make her way into the crowd, she met the woman coming out. Eh, words cannot define the action. I was shocked at the Joy I saw. A lioness in human clothing. I was expecting the woman to caution her but the woman started begging. I had to intervene by going to calm Joy.

We managed to make her stop talking. The woman apologised to us and asked us for our names and departments. We told her except Joy who wasn't willing to talk to the woman again.

BECAUSE OF ANN

After we made the woman believe we had nothing against her, we left the premises with eyes still concentrated on us. From afar, I sighted my course-mates outside; a clear indication that there was no lecture going on.

In every department, there is always that one student that if you see him or her outside, then you are 100% sure lecture is not going on.

The morning was tough for us and was almost expiring. It was already some minutes past 11. I decided to keep going with the girls. We went to the ever busy auditorium, mostly disturbed by Bus Admin, Mass Communication and Fellowship students. We looked for a quiet corner upstairs and sat down.

Joy wasn't still saying anything. I tried making them understand that we have reasons to be happy. One of the numerous reasons was that she later found the phone; not just find the phone but found it while we were still there, standing at a spot. If she didn't see it, people may still suspect us any day.

Agreeing with me, Joy started explaining what her anger was. She hated being thought of as a thief. She was a girl that values value. A girl who knows that good name is better than riches. At the end, joy was restored to Joy and we were able to find back our normal selves.

Point: Don't talk about things if you didn't see them. Don't broadcast what you heard from somebody when you know you can't provide a proof that the person told you, if you adhere to this, you will go a long way without being in trouble. Avoid sincerely laying allegation on people.

After talking for more than an hour, we got to know each other more. I will tell you things they told me as we progress but don't tell anybody I told you. At a time, I needed to go and check what was happening in my department since I've not really been involved since the previous day. Before I left, I collected Joy's number.

On my way to Engineering complex, out of being security minded, smart and conscious, I noticed two guys were following me. I tried to confirm my guess and followed the road leading to LHC, the guys did same. I tried walking fast and found out the guys increased their pace too.

KELVIN OSSAI

Instantly, thoughts began to run through my mind; what have I done this time around? Could it be the woman at the centre or the because of one of the two girls I have been with? I think this is serious.

I was thinking of taking to my heel when the guys started calling me. I was more afraid being that they knew my name. I turned from afar to give them the last look before I show them the use of pace but I saw them gesturing at me to wait.

Something from my village was telling me to wait and know what they want but the devil was...

A LIAR.

I stepped down from LHC building facing Dean's block, I took a turn to Engineering complex and after making sure I was out of the guy's view, I ran as fast as my legs could carry me. Good enough, running has never been my problem.

Psychologically, I knew that the guys were still strolling thinking they will climb down and see me walking.

I ran to a safe corner and hid. I watched as the guys came out and couldn't think out my movement. They looked around for some seconds; giving up, they turned and left.

I gave a sigh of relief. Immediately, a hand dropped on my shoulder. I was shocked. My heart was already running. I had the courage to turn and look at the person after he said

'Who you dey run from?'

I was annoyed when I found out it was my course-mate. I just told him 'nobody' and left. I got to class and decided to sit at the back so that I will be able to know whoever that comes in and goes out.

Soon, our last lecturer for the day came to class. You know there are these lecturers you wish they were never your lecturer; they don't miss classes at all. With his boring talks, we out of no option settled for the mechanical course. The most hated course in the department; not because the course was hard to understand but because we were being confused by our shepherd. At 3pm on the dot, the man left the class.

BECAUSE OF ANN

Having not forgotten what happened so soon, I joined the first group of students going home and walked to the gate quietly. I saw a loading bus and entered without having to care if I like the seat or if the bus is strong enough. All I wanted was to get out of school premises.

Some minutes later, we were totally inside town. I intentionally allowed the bus pass my street and went to drop at the last bus stop. The worst that can happen is allowing anyone trace you to your house.

Coming down from the bus, I checked if anyone cared about my movement. No one did so I paid the driver and hurried went into the community market. The speed at which I walked passed people in the market made it look like I stole something but I cared less. Soon I was at the back of the market, and from there, I took a five minutes' walk back to my street.

Getting to my compound, I looked left, right, front and back to make sure no one was concentrating on me. When I confirmed I was alone, I zoomed inside. I opened my door, dropped my bag and lay down on the floor.

It was really a tough day. The bible said in all situation, we should thank God; so I said

'Thank you Jehovah'

I woke up around 6pm. I had slept off while resting on the floor. The sleep made me believe all things were in the past. I woke up with a new spirit entirely. I first went outside to view the colour of the sky. It was blue. Chelsea for life (*for una mind o*, lol).

I went back inside and went straight to wash myself in the bathroom. It was a Friday and a good day for students who party. My compound was filled with happy people, all preparing for the night groove. People like me, what do we know? Our only flexing is on champions league nights in viewing centres.

After bathing, it looked like the water I bath myself with filled my belly. I felt less like eating. I decided to buy and store bread and Pepsi should the need arise at night.

I didn't feel like reading but my conscience wouldn't allow me rest so I decided to flip through my note to see if there was any assignment. Good enough, there was

KELVIN OSSAI

one. And it was really an important one. It was mathematics and we will be submitting it the next day being a Saturday. Happy that I had something to do, I started solving it slowly to make sure it takes my time.

Half way into the assignment, Ann called. We did just the normal Nigerian call. When she ended the call, I remembered I collected Joy's number. I dialled her and she picked at the second ring. I could hear P Square and Don Jazzy's Collabo in the background. On hearing my voice, she called out my name

'Kelvin?' and I certified her accuracy. I'm proud of people who save me the stress of introducing myself during phone calls. I asked of her whereabouts and she said she was in the street. I allowed it end there, I didn't want to exceed my half by asking what she was doing in the street. We ended the call by promising each other that we would talk later.

When I ended the call, I continued doing my assignment. By 9pm, I was through with the assignment already. I still took my time to transfer it to a fresh foolscap. I folded it well and dropped it in my maths note. I spent the rest of the night Facebooking and listening to radio with my *Nokia touch*. The best day on radio is a Friday night. Different songs from different stations. Then the top songs were 'Oluwa ni' by Reekado banks, 'Somebody great' by Korea Bello, 'Mama' by Kiss Daniel, 'Duro' by Alhaji Tekno, etc.

I woke up by 5am to meet a Saturday morning. Acknowledging how early I woke up, I stayed still on the bed and started browsing the internet. It was a Saturday so I started checking the matches for the day and the times they were slated for.

When I felt satisfied, I left the bed and started preparing for the day's lecture. That is DSPG engineering students for you. On Saturdays, we go to school too. For me, it was my favourite lecture day where all engineering students of the same level would have to gather in one hall for lecture. You would hear comments from every angle.

Happily, I woke up. Happily, I went to school. The joy of the lecture is that the lecturer is the funniest lecturer one can ever have; you can ask Maths and Stat department about Mr Morrison.

BECAUSE OF ANN

At 7:30am, I was already in a bus crawling to school. A hall where 8 departments are going to stay, one must go early enough to secure a seat at the front or its equivalent.

Finally, I got to school around 7:50am. The class was supposed to start by 8:00am but our lecturer comes by 8:30am and after that, nobody comes in unless God speaks to him.

Na so o.

I got to class and met a few students already in. I greeted the few familiar faces and looked for a seat too.

In every department, there are those students who come early and still go sit at the back. Some of those students were already in class.

I looked back, most people were seriously copying assignment from one source or the other. I removed the pair of ear buds from my neck and plugged it into my phone and ear. I was enjoying my Celine Dion 'A new day has come' when my phone started ringing. I looked at the phone and it was Ann. Just to pick the call someone hit hand on my desk. I raised my head to see who the idiot was and verily verily, it was the two guys that were following me the previous day. They even added two other guys and were now four.

I wanted to either fly or vanish but none worked. I stood paused with nothing possible in my head. I looked at the guys with a pleading face and one of them greeted, 'guy good morning.'

The others also greeted.

In my mind, I said to them, 'what's good about the morning?'

But in reality I replied them, '*my oga them, una good morning o*'

We dey pursue you yesterday, you just vanish like that, one of them said.

I didn't know what to make of it whether they were trying to be friendly so that people will not notice them or they were just harmless. My face showed confusion so one of the guys added.

KELVIN OSSAI

E be like say you never recognise us. I stylish nodded my head. One of the new guys added

'No wonder you dey do somehow, nor vex, we be Agric Engineering students, we just want make you put us through for that assignment before.'

I was relieved but was still trying to be careful with them as people can be so tactical when they want to overcome you.

I faked a smile for them, apologized for making them vain search for me the previous day then asked them to sit down. They did sit down and at once, we started solving the questions. It was easy for me because I have solved the questions before. Within 20 minutes, we were through with the Pascal Triangle questions. At the end of the whole thing, I noticed that what was more important to them was how to be counted among people that submit assignment. Only one iy showed real zeal to learn and the guy did. Maybe their plan was that he will re-teach them later.

I was appreciative to God when these guys thanked me and left. Before leaving, they told me their names and said they've seen me several times around their department and believed I probably didn't recognise them. Seeing that they had no ill intention, I opened up to them that I thought they were after my life that was why I vanished the previous day. They smiled, thanked me and went to the back to copy the assignment.

I was free from another trouble. Minutes later, our lecturer came. He just talked, collected his assignment and told us to go and prepare for exams.

Without wasting time, I put myself on the way to my home. On the path to the gate, I remembered I later missed Ann's call. I decided to call her back and she wasn't picking either.

I put my phone back in my pocket and concentrated on my journey. There was no time to plug ear buds;

Gordons will say,

BECAUSE OF ANN

'No man goes to war and entangles himself with the affairs of the world, hallelujah'

Chapter 2

As seconds counted, minutes counted, hours counted, days counted, we got closer to our first exam. Every student was busy with one thing or the other. Some were busy queuing at bursary for collection of their school fee receipt, others were at the ID card centre hustling for an ID card. The good ones were always on the road to library. Some formed groups and were learning together.

KELVIN OSSAI

Myself, I had nothing to worry about. I was even already tired of waiting for the exam but my conscience wouldn't let me sleep without reading. Some students who were experienced stopped coming to school. People like me who knew nothing continued paying transport to school to do nothing.

It was already middle of the week and through our exam timetable, it was clear like DSTV that next week, exams start.

Ann and Joy?

For Joy, I hadn't seen or heard from her for some time. Her number was not reachable so I forced myself to believe she was preparing for exams.

Ann was always there. Though we hardly saw each other but we always talked on phone. She always advised that I should read. We were close but still far from each other. The highest we did was ask each other the street we lived but we never talked about visiting each other and it didn't look like any of us was planning to. Maybe it was the effect of the exams or we were just trying to keep each other distant.

It was a sunny Friday. At 2pm, I returned home from school. Lectures had officially stopped for a long time but I didn't feel like staying at home. I prefer going to school to see things that happen and then charge my phone. What made the Friday special was that every church will organise all-night services for their members with regards to the exams.

You need to see how students do attend like their lives depend on it. God is really going through a lot. People who hardly attend church on Sundays all remembered God because they needed him to make exams easy for them.

At home, my plan was to sleep to make sure I stay awake for the all-night. My own prayer point was that failure should be far away from me and again that devil should not even bother making plans for me not to talk of the ones that will not come to pass. My plan to sleep was defeated as time kept going but I never slept. At 7pm, I was already set for the miracle night as many people referred to it. Some people can do anyhow *sha*. They won't read their books because Pastor said he will pray for them to pass exams. My friend this is when that saying heaven helps those who help themselves becomes important.

BECAUSE OF ANN

Soon it was 9pm. The programme was to start by 10pm. By 9:30, I was already on my way to church. You needed to see holiness. I didn't even bother talking to anybody, just to make sure I didn't offend anyone. We were made to understand that God answers the prayer of a holy man faster so I needed to make it happen.

I got to church and met what the bible calls multitude. The crowd there had never been that large on a normal Sunday service. I wanted to laugh but I didn't want to do anything that will provoke God so I kept my cool.

Let's save time and space.

The all-night came and went. Truly, the presence of God was seen. Traditionally, we all went with our pens and the minister had time to anoint every pen one after the other. Me, I don't like trouble so I went with 2 pens; should one get lost or spoilt.

Saturday was for sleep. I slept from morning till 11am. I woke up, ate and went to watch match. I returned around 6pm and reading continued. That night, I didn't bother thinking about Facebook.

Like I said before, no man goes to war and entangles himself with the affairs of the world. It was a day without Ann or her shadow. It was a short day for me because I spent the first 11 hours either in church or sleeping.

The next day brought a Sunday. Our Pastor was stressing on thanking God for success in exams. For me, my faith was already charged fully. Thanking God every now and then was not a problem for me.

So finally, the Monday arrived. First day of exam, Use of English. 8:00am paper.

Out of curiosity *abi na anxiety*, I woke up around 5am. In life, when you've been waiting for something to come for a long time, the last 1 hour to the arrival of that thing will look like another 1 year.

I didn't even have a good night. I didn't sleep deep. All my thoughts were about the exam even in my sleep. So by 5am, I was already up. Lacking what to do, I decided to flip through my note again.

By 6 o'clock at dot, I sent a good luck wish to all my fellow students whom I had their numbers. By 6:30am, I was already set for school. Didn't know why but that

KELVIN OSSAI

was the day I dressed best since after my matric. From that day, it became part of me to dress like I'm going to a party every first day of exam.

Getting to school, I met some other maybe more anxious students. I greeted the few I could and all they could give me in return was questioning about my dressing. They were wondering if I knew we had exam. I smiled at their comments and continued my groove. I was on a safer side and less worried because English studies has never been a problem to me.

At the time of start of exam, we were moved to a hall we never dreamt of entering someday.

I'm not here to narrate the exam experience anyway.

Before time, I finished answering what I knew. The people who submitted first were the girls in the department. Almost all of them. I began wondering if it was only girls who knew English Language.

I left school that day feeling at ease. I believed I did things the best way I could in the exam making just few mistakes (which is normal).

I got home motivated. I was happy with how the exam started but the problem was that the next day, we will be writing two courses; Use of Library and Citizenship Education.

I did the necessary things I had to do and once again, I got busy with my books.

Around 7pm, I decided to call Ann to ask her how the exam was. Being that every year one student irrespective of department wrote Use of English, we started asking each other about our questions.

It was fun to find out we wrote almost the same thing. The only difference was just use of synonyms but the end point was the same. She said that she wrote well and seeing how close our questions were, we booked to meet early in the morning the next day to read the other courses together because they were courses everybody offers as a first year student undermining the department one is.

The additional call I got that night was from home asking how the exam was. I was glad to have a positive answer for them.

BECAUSE OF ANN

That night, the thought of Joy came to my head. I tried her number but it was still unavailable.

The next morning, around 7am, I was already in school waiting for Ann to come. She called to ask of my whereabouts and I described the place to her.

It was difficult for her but at the end, she located the place. She confessed she never knew the place existed in the school. It was a hidden place for mainly engineering students both the good and the bad. There, people read, people charge phones, people sleep, people even smoke, the one me and my friends introduced later in second semester was table tennis.

I was surprised when Ann came with 2 other girls she referred to as her friends. One called Blessing, the other called Wemi. As at then, I was not used to talking with many girls at the same time but I had no option.

Immediately they entered, all eyes were on them. The whole students who were there focused on them and watched as they came to meet me. Good enough, there were always tables to sit down so they sat down. After little introduction and pleasantries, we went straight to business because we had less time. They brought out their books and showed me the area of concentration that they were given. Good enough, they were close to the questions in the past questions we had. I took note of some of the things I did overlook and also shared some points with them. It was really a mutual gathering. They gained from me, I gained from them.

Each time I tried looking at the other guys in the building, I get my eyes fixed to theirs. Everyone continued looking at us like we were area of concentration for the coming exam. I was a bit shy about the whole scene.

The early morning exams actually did start at 8:30am, so by 8:15, the girls departed from me. I remained in the building with some other mates while those who were always ready to set formations started rushing to class.

Once again, we wrote in a strange hall and glory be to God, all things were bright and beautiful. The exam was good. The tips from Ann and her friends covered one question, number 6 and I did it with what the bible refers to as gladness.

KELVIN OSSAI

We were to sit two papers that day so we retired to our various libraries to do what they want to do. Myself, I went to my hood to stay. Ann later called to ask if I was there. On a positive reply, she said she was coming.

Probably I shouldn't have let her come again. This was how everything we suffered started.

Soon, she came, this time around alone. I asked about her friends and she said they had somewhere else to go and that they will join us later.

Chapter 3

It was still some minutes past noon. The next paper was to commence by 3pm so we had enough time of approximately 3 hours to do whatever that pleased us.

Ann and I started by talking about the exam. She too, said the exam was good and that my tips helped; then I shared the same testimony to her.

After hearing how everything went on a positive note, we were inspired to read more together.

BECAUSE OF ANN

After about 1 hour 30 minutes, we were tired of book. We started doing other mini discussions. Like before, people's eyes were still on us. Those who were very foolish were hailing me at intervals even when I paid a deaf ear to them.

That day, we finished the exam around 5pm. I still tried to see Ann before we went our separate ways. I got home a bit tired but happy the tiredness wasn't in vain. I was happy with how the exams were going.

Our exam timetable divided everything. First we do general courses, then Mechanical courses before coming home to do our departmental courses.

Being this way, after that day, what I had in common with Ann concerning exams expired. Being a Mass Com student, there was no way we could help each other any longer so we got serious with ourselves.

We hardly met at school. All we did most times was talk on phone. This brought questions to me in my department,

'Where your girlfriend?'

Nobody wanted to believe we were not dating. They won't even allow me joke with a girl again in class o. At the slightest joke, they would remind me that I have a girlfriend. I was tired of denying it so I had to keep mute about the whole thing and decided to take it easy with anybody that says it.

Days later, we were through with our exams. It wasn't easy but that was why we came to school and had to be happy that it had come and gone.

Exam ended for Engineering students. Business students still had about two courses to sit for.

In my compound, there's a boy who said he was in Bus Admin. I asked him to show me his timetable and he did. I didn't bother to ask him if he knew Joy because I knew he didn't. He'll rather start asking me JAMB questions, *'Which of the Joys?'*

From the time table, I saw the days they will be having exams. I decided to try my luck in looking for Joy.

KELVIN OSSAI

On the said exam day, I dressed well and went to school. At the time the exam was to start, people started running up and down looking for where their hall was.

Being that I knew Joy's surname, I was able to find out the hall she would stay if she was really in school.

I quickly ran off to the hall written on the timetable. I was the first to get there, to make sure I have a view of everyone coming inside.

It was easier because the department is so populated that there's no hall in the school that can contain all the students so they are always divided into halls during exams using the initials of their surname.

So you see something like,

A-E hall 1

G-M hall 2

I was almost giving up seeing that the hall was getting filled up. I was just being patient, trying to wait until the supervisor comes in. I was beginning to doubt if I really knew her surname because my eyes searched every corner of the hall but she was not there.

My oil of patience dried up. As I turned to go, I saw was somebody running towards me shouting, 'see my ID card boyfriend oh!'

I was filled with mixed feelings when I saw Joy approaching me. Didn't know if to be happy for seeing her or form sad for having missed her all the while.

At times, one has to put on contradictory feelings and for me, this was one of the times.

I first showed happiness as she ran into my arm. Then I released her, I started explaining how bad I'd felt without hearing from her. She explained that her phone was stolen so she had to buy another sim. She brought out a Tecno feature phone to prove she wasn't lying, stressing that she had no much money to buy another one.

BECAUSE OF ANN

I was the one who saw that her supervisor was entering inside. I quickly typed my number in her phone and dialled it. Confirming that it rang, she ran into the hall. I was happy, not only because I saw her but because my labour was fruitful and again she showed she valued me even though she didn't mean it.

I called Ann and her number was switched off showing she was already in the exam hall as she also had exams that morning.

Having nothing to do, I went to the Engineering complex where I could stay and see people I know. Journeying from SBS to MPH, I would have to pass through CDC centre. There, I saw people gathering under different canopies. I summoned courage to go there. When I saw one of my course mates there, I walked straight to him like I've been looking for him. We greeted and I asked him what he was doing under the canopy. He explained that it was CDC training. A training that we've paid NGN5000 for after paying school fees. On hearing that, I quickly asked him if I was free to join the training and he replied positively that I was free to join any group I like.

I looked around, there were those called perfume making, soup making, beading, make-up, generator repair, etc. I laughed when I saw people gathering in the generator repair canopy.

The programme was for three days so how do one intend learning how to repair a generator with 3 days.

The only thing that looked reasonable to me was fixing of dish antenna. At least, it is a neat Job. All you need is a spanner, size 10.

I joined the group. I was used to some of the things they were saying so I enjoyed learning the whole stuff.

When the teacher was summarizing, I noticed one guy looking at me like he was reading something from my face. I wasn't comfortable any longer so I had to give him back something hard. I also focused my gaze on him. Soon I recognised that there was something special about the look. The guy started walking towards me and I stood paused waiting. The Buhari in me was telling me to run but the me in me told me to say; at least people will be there to separate fight if the need arises.

KELVIN OSSAI

When things are narrated in writing, the readers may feel it really took time. Nope. Some of these things we read in 30 seconds did happen in just 5 seconds.

This was one of those occasions. Before I could say José Mourinho, the guy was already standing before me. He extended his hand for a handshake as he greeted me. I replied his greeting and handshake looking into his eyes to know what I don't know.

‘Have we met before?’ the guy queried.

‘I think so, but I can't remember when or where,’ I replied.

The guy focused on the church bangle in my wrist and asked again.

Are you a Redeemed member?

Me: Yes

Guy: *Ibu onye ukwani*

abi? (you be ukwani person abi?)

Me: Mmm...yeah.

Guy: I think we met at Redemption camp.

Me: Yeah! That was 2014. *Ahhh, guy you don change oh.*

Guy: *Na so na. It's 2 years already and that time I carry afro.*

Me: (smiling) *Na so. What of those your guys na?*

Guy: *Them dey o. The other 2 dey DELSU dey do their music.*

Me: *Ahhh, those guys serious o.*

Guy: *Na so na.*

Me: *So how far na? Which department you dey?*

Guy: *I dey Accountancy. What of you?*

BECAUSE OF ANN

Me: Elect Elect.

Guy: ND *abi*?

Me: Yeah. ND1

Guy: Okay. *I dey ND 2 now.*

Me: *You na big boy na.*

Guy: *Big boy ke.*

I didn't know a better way to ask him his name so I gave him my phone to type and save his number. That was when I remembered his name, Prince-will.

I dialled his number and asked him to save mine with Kelvin.

Men, the world is just a small place. How about I stole his property and ran away that time? Won't I be in a deep shit now? They were good guys *sha*. He and his friends *abi* brothers. I met them at Redemption Camp kitchen where we do go to collect food for our areas. They came from a different area but we were all from Delta 3 and fortunately spoke the same language. That night, food didn't come early so we waited for more than 2 hours making fun and mockery of each other forgetting that we were in the presence of God. People who could not differentiate between hardware and software were well mocked. Other intellectual tests were done also. When food finally came, we waited for each other and trekked back to the auditorium together through the far and busy road. We visited each other's block that Tuesday night to make sure we don't miss each other.

That was 2014. His two other friends were always carrying guitar around. I wasn't surprised to hear they were studying music. It was through their company that I met a very good and beautiful friend of mine, Esther on the Saturday of 2014 annual convention at the playground.

That will be a story for another day.

Life being funny, I still kept contact with Esther but other three guys, somehow, I lost their numbers and they never called. The only call we made to each other was to know if we got home on the Sunday that we left camp. I was even the one that called.

KELVIN OSSAI

****back to the present****

I watched as Prince-will went back to his canopy. I was very happy to meet him again. They were very friendly and I was willing to keep him as a friend in school. Not long after, our teacher said the lesson for the day was over that we would continue the next day with how to track Joy TV signal.

I was interested in the whole training and was willing to come back the next day. From the training centre, I went home straight.

It was a new lifestyle for me. There was no more everyday reading. In fact, there was no more reading. Exam has come and gone.

In the evening, I wanted to call Joy but I didn't have airtime so I decided to go and buy *card* (airtime). Getting to the shop, I met one of my course mates buying something too.

We greeted and he asked if I was still around. I told him yes, explaining that I want to wait and learn from the programme CDC was conducting. I explained the whole thing for him and he was interested in it; the whole film being that he has paid for it unconsciously.

He asked if I was living around and from the shop, I pointed to my compound. He was delighted to see that we were neighbours. He pointed to his house too for me. My spirit agreed with his and that was how we took each other serious.

We've been seeing each other but never showed concern until that day. That was how James became my friend and I became James' friend.

I called Ann and Joy later and they certified that their exams were good, announcing that they would finish their exams the next day being Thursday.

Later that night, I received a call from home about my coming back. I said Saturday explaining that I had a training going on in my school that I was attending already.

BECAUSE OF ANN

Everything was bright and beautiful. On Thursday, together with James, I went to school by 9am, the time of the training. I was happy my new found friend was ready to learn with me.

At the end of the lesson, the man announced to us that the next day will be the last day of the training and we should endeavour to attend it for finishing touches. We thanked him and left. On our way out, James received a phone call from his sister, as he told me later. After the call, he explained to me that his siblings were pressuring him to come to Lagos and because of that, he will be going to Asaba the next day being Friday then from Asaba to Lagos on Saturday.

I wasn't happy about the fact that my new found friend was leaving me just after a short time but I was consoled knowing that the next semester, I would be with a reasonable person as a friend.

Later, me and James settled down at my place to review our exam questions and then think about the possible courses we were going to offer in the coming semester. There has always been debate if will continue offering Technical drawing or not. We also talked about it, believing that it's not our calling to be carrying TD boards around.

He left around 4pm with the excuse of going to arrange his properties for his journey. I called Joy then, her number was switched off then I called Ann and she picked.

After congratulating her for being through with her exam, from the other end, she blew the whistle, 'I will be coming to your house tomorrow'

Me: Eh? My house?

Ann: *Yes na. Abi make I nor come?*

Me: *Come. I dey wait.*

Ann: Okay. *Which time you go dey house?*

Me: By 12, I will be back from school.

Ann: Okay, 1pm then.

Me: Okay.

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Boys are always dirty until a girl calls them to say she's coming to visit. Sometimes, the room is not even dirty o but the call will just make the guy start looking for what's unkempt in his room.

I looked at my room and hissed. I was ready to leave it the way it was because of laziness. *If she nor wan come again because my house nor neat, make she go.* Neatness is a test for ladies not guys (don't kill me o).

I spent my night chatting and watching videos on Facebook.

The next morning brought that TGIF feeling. It was a Friday with style. I said a short prayer before leaving bed. I just finished bathing when James came in with his bag ready for leaving. Being that I've eaten, I dressed up and walked him to the park from which he would take a vehicle to Asaba. After spending a short time there with him, the bus filled up and they left. Myself, I got a bike and journeyed to school.

When I got to school, it was already 9am. Some students were already there waiting but there was no sign of the teacher. After waiting for another 1 hour, it got obvious that the man was not coming. I had no time to waste so I turned around and went home.

I was relieved to get home having extra time for myself. I was a bit nervous about the whole thing. Apart from female course-mates, I've never had a strange girl come to visit me. For course mates, it was easy because there is never any need to form. We all know each other very well in class but this is somebody who I don't know what I will do and she will see me as an uncompleted building.

Okay, let me stop wasting words.

By some minutes past 12pm, she called to know if I was at home and I replied positively. She then told me she would be coming with one of her friends.

I didn't know what to make of it so I relaxed for anything that wants to happen to happen.

I gave her directions and at almost 1 o'clock, they were at my place.

BECAUSE OF ANN

Silver and gold had I not but mouth I had. I used mouth to welcome them. After giving them seats, I made them laugh until they felt at home.

I asked what I will offer them hoping they will say Pepsi but they surprised me by asking me what I cooked.

At the end of it, we ate eba with the soup I had at home. God being kind, the soup was in form. It wasn't new to me that they praised my cooking skill as a guy.

We spent splendid time together making it look like we've known for years.

To cut the long story short, they left around 4pm after telling me they will be leaving Ogwashi the next day being Saturday. Myself, I had nothing left to do in school. All the people I could be hanging out with were out of school, so I planned to leave town the next day.

Chapter 4

Days turned into weeks and weeks into months. The holidays were

coming to an end. I don't know about other people but for me, I was not comfortable with the fact that our result was not yet out. There were already speculations that school will resume in 7 days' time.

I've always kept contact with Ann. We did call and met daily on Facebook. The only thirst was to meet when school resumes. We were already getting fond of each other.

Joy has remained Joy all day. Her number never connected since the last time I told you we talked. I even got tired of trying and was already living like I never knew she existed.

BECAUSE OF ANN

Fast forward to the future. I resumed school 3 weeks after resumption day. I was ready to still be at home making money if not for James and Henry who were calling me individually to tell me school was getting serious.

The day I resumed school, I told nobody. I just got to my compound that morning, dropped my bag in my dust filled room, collected a book and zoomed off to school.

I had been informed before time that we'd been moved from Engineering complex to be taking lectures in one new building they called New Hall 3. I walked straight to the building and eye-searched the different rooms in the complex. I saw familiar faces in Room 5 and bounced in there. Immediately I entered, some silly guys started hailing me, 'Ossai Ossai'.

I quickly looked for a seat and sat down. I looked at the lecturer thinking he was annoyed but instead he smiled and asked if I was just resuming and the department chorused yes.

The man welcomed me and put the class back to other. He continued his lecture in which he kept mentioning forbidden band, valence band, conducting band, PN junction and some other rubbish which I didn't seem to understand. I felt like I entered the wrong class. For the first time, I felt I resumed late. I consoled myself with the sure thing that I will read it.

After the lecture, we were directed to the far away Engineering complex for practicals. For the first time, I saw the change in lecture hall as a punishment. How can we be trekking from Lagos to Nigeria (lol) for practical under hot sun? Nothing is totally bad anyway. In that hall, I have chances of seeing Ann as often as possible being that New Hall 1 and 2 was for them and we were just beside them in New Hall 3.

It was a new semester and a new everything. I never knew it would be an extended semester for me. Extended, you know what that means from extended family.

I now had two friends; James and Henry. I met Henry in the middle of first semester. He was just a simple person, main reason we clicked each other but the friendship was not that deep until this time. James and Henry didn't know each

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other yet. To them, they were just course mates. I was just the conjunction linking them and was ready to mix things up with time.

By 3pm, together with James and Henry, I got home. They helped me to put my room in order and spent time with me, telling me how everything was changing. It then occurred to me that the beginning of school is second semester not the first. I was ready for it anyway. Before leaving, they dropped their notes for me. That evening, I called Ann and she said she will be resuming by the weekend. Everything looked bright and beautiful.

In a short time, I got used to the semester. We were still offering 12 courses but with a reduced number of practicals which made the time-table more friendly than that of the previous semester.

My note was already up to date and I was beginning to get on the same lane with every other person who resumed earlier by asking mates questions.

You will find out some people are very intelligent but *explain ordinary small thing for person, them nor fit. Na only to write exam them sabi.*

At this point, Ann and everyone who wanted to resume school had already resumed school.

I remember the day Ann landed in Ogwashi, she called me to announce she landed safely as she told me earlier that she will be landing (High Lander like her).

She dropped late so the next day we met at school and she told me that if I want what she brought for me, I will have to come and collect it at her house.

Not like I had any reason to object so I accepted the offer gladly. I had already formed a habit of not leaving school unless myself, James and Henry reach an agreement to do so. None of us go home without each other even when we didn't live in same place. Though me and James lived a stone throw from each other.

That fateful day, I explained the situation to my friends and they agreed that we will leave school together, I will drop on the way and they'll go home. Everything

BECAUSE OF ANN

went as planned. She asked me to drop when I get to Don Jazzy bar and I did just exactly.

Not long after, I saw her waving at me to come over. I went to meet her and she took me to her house. What did she give me? What she gave me does not concern you. Lol. *I know say body don dey pepper some people now. Before una start to dey think another thing, abeg she give me bangle. You see, e nor concern you.*

Back to the present

The semester was going well. I still hadn't set my eyes on Joy and her number wasn't still connecting. Though that was the least of my worries. It was already student's week to tell you how far the semester has gone but our first semester result was yet to be pasted due to issues nobody will tell us about. To worsen issues, our Exam officer was taking us a course for the first time and each time he came to class, he will remind us of how many of us that failed. That reminder always sent blood back to my heart 5 times the normal rate.

Student's week came and those who had guts were enjoying it. I was always the busy type but if you search for what I'm doing, you will find nothing. Just busy doing nothing. I had time for nothing. Jersey day, Cultural day, Old school day, I heard of all of them but saw them as not my thing. The only thing that interested me was the football competition popularly known as Rector's cup.

I trained with my department and was readily available for selection. We were grouped into a team that made us appear as underdog. Playing against more populated departments. We won our first match in a game that I was not used. In the second match, I was brought into the game in second half, my team was already leading 1-0. At the last minute of the game, a shot was fired into our post from a corner kick rebound. I was in a position to head the ball away but I couldn't due to poor decision making. The match ended draw and hardened our chances of qualification. I wasn't happy with myself and decided to leave the team.

I left school environment to Warri. I barely spent 3 days and the student's week finished. Before the day I planned to come back, my friends called me to say result has been pasted. My heart almost jumped out of my mouth when I heard the news. It then occurred to me it would have been better if they never pasted the result. But

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it was a river I needed to cross so I decided to face it. To climax the whole thing, I started from asking them about their own result. They told me and I congratulated them. I avoided asking them if they saw mine and was bidding them goodbye when Henry queried me, *'You nor wan ask about your result?'*

I didn't know what to say so I gave up and asked them how it was. I was a bit relieved when James said

'Guy congrats, you be man'

I laughed and asked him what he meant by that. He told me my GP but I refused to believe. I told them it was one of their jokes and ended the call.

That night I wasn't able to sleep. All I wanted was to go and see my result myself. I woke up in the morning the next day and was rushing to be on my way. One thing led to the other and my Mum delayed me till about 2pm, before letting me go.

There is nothing like peace of mind o. Throughout my journey, there was nothing like play music in the vehicle or Facebook. Remember I told you no man goes to war and entangles himself with the affairs of the world.

I got to Ogwashi Uku around 4pm. I opened my door, threw my bag inside and flew to school. Unfortunately, I got to school and couldn't access the result. The notice board has been locked in the HOD's office to be brought out the next day so that it will not be torn by students who I don't even know their reasons for doing so. I went back home not comfortable for one second.

I got home and went to beg James to become serious. He stood on his word and added that it was among the top five result of the department. But who will believe that? Since 2013 I've always believed in a quote by the gate keeper of Ogume Grammar School in my village,

'Seeing is believing'.

That night, I wasn't able to sleep. The next morning, I was preparing as early as 7am to go to school when my Uncle called me.

'Good morning sir.'

'Good morning *ke*. Have you seen your result?'

BECAUSE OF ANN

‘Ehmm, no. I wanted...’

‘Don't bother explaining. Your result has been posted since two days now. If you don't know, I know. The next word I want to hear from you when I call you is about your result, so hurry up.’

He ended the call. Hey! Maybe they are now thinking that I'm hiding my rubbish poor result. *I don't die is when I reach school see I don't store carry-overs.* Little did I know that it was a result that was going to change the rest of my school story. I didn't bother to eat, I went straight to school and direct to the place the notice board was locked. The woman in charge was just entering inside and I followed her. There was no time to waste. She noticed my condition and I briefed her when she asked about it. She laughed and opened the door. The notice board was there for me to do whatever I like. Ladies and gentlemen, when I saw my name on the notice board in a printed paper, I started planning of what to do to James and Henry.

I have to do something to them either good or bad to make them remember the first time they were serious.

I knew I did well during the exam but didn't know it was that well. I heaved a sigh of relief knowing that I will have something to write home about. What made me more calm about the result was that the other top 4 people gathered 3.57, 3.47, 3.44, 3.43 and left me with 3.41.

I copied the grades immediately and being that there was still no lectures because of the student's week, I headed home without delay. I couldn't contain it so I called my Uncle and told him I have seen the result but will send it to him when I get home.

Small boy, immediately I got home, I brought out the paper where I wrote the full result and started typing it with my phone from course 1 to 12. I can't just tell him the GP. I needed to let him see all the A's and AB's. Funny enough, it was the weakest course of the semester, Software Engineering that I scored CD. I wanted to ask how come but kept mute when I found out that a good percentage of the department scored 40 to 45.

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That was it o. That silly result exposed me in the department. Some called me wicked saying I always disturbed them in class to read at home but it wasn't that a fact. I joke in class only when one is needed.

You know that for first year students, when they make friends from foreign departments, they will always ask,

'what is your GP?' as if they were the one that sent you that school. If you don't tell them, it will look as if you don't have a result. One of those days, I met with Ann. The result thing continued.

Ann: I hear say them don paste una result.

Me: Yeah. What about una own?

Ann: Them say e never ready o.

Me: Una too many na

Ann: Na true. So how you result na? Hope e good.

Me: Yeah. E dey ok

Ann: Wetin be your GP?

I wished she didn't ask. I couldn't ignore the question so I answered her accurately. The look on her face showed she didn't expect it from me; you know Mass Communication students *na*, they see engineering as a no go area and respect anybody who flourishes there. That's a wrong view anyway. Everybody has his/her area of specialization and may only be good there. Don't be surprised to hear that a first class student in engineering may not be able to make a result in OTM; some will anyway.

Let's continue...

Time passed and the academic journey continued.

Things became tense; everybody started expecting more from people with the top GP; if anything was explained in the class and people didn't understand, part of

BECAUSE OF ANN

people in the class will divide themselves into groups and those guys with top results will have to re-explain things to them. It was like a challenge to us to prove our result as if they were management but we tried being equal to the task. It only frustrates when you explained a thing to Paul yesterday and today Peter comes for the same thing.

People relied and others overlooked. Some respected and got close. For this reason, Ann saw me as a supposed friend. She felt I was serious with studies and will be a motivation to anyone around me. The number of time we meet in school increased and she was already familiar to people in my department. Sometimes, I will come from nowhere and they will start telling me

'Your babe come look for you o'

I was already tired of saying I wasn't dating her so I allowed people address her anyhow they like after all, there was no girl I owe anything. Hope you understand.

At this rate, I was more frequent to her house and vice versa. She became the best female friend I have. She was already used to James and Henry and the guys too did accept her. Everything was going on like there was never going to be a problem.

Despite all hard times and good times, I never forgot about Joy. I always lived each day knowing we will get each other again someday. As for her number, I had already given up.

Why did I keep looking for this lost Joy? If you ask me, I didn't know if my mind was deceiving me or not but it kept telling me I should not try play with Ann that Joy will be a better trade. You know in a ship called friendship, there are these friends you will meet but you become afraid of telling them about one silly relationship for the fear of getting them chased away. At the end, relationship, you nor get, friend, you nor see.

That was my case with Ann. I was comfortable seeing her everyday as a friend. But probably because Joy was out of my reach, I kept gunning for her. Sometimes we all want that person we know we can never get.

So one fateful day, one of those days that Bus Admin students do wear their white and black uniform, our lecturer for the afternoon didn't show up. Every member of

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the department was just hanging around waiting for the next lecture. From where I sat with James and Henry, I could see white and black uniformed people coming out from New Hall 1 after their lecture. I asked questions and confirmed they were ND1 students and the Joy I have been looking for was likely to be there.

Only James agreed to follow me and we went to the way out of the hall to stay. Very soon, hundreds of students were matching up and down making noise.

I smiled and called it luck when I saw my short dark beautiful Joy coming out in her astonishing black and white dress.

'Look at her coming,' I said to James. Like she's been looking for me too, she sighted me. It was easy for her because we looked odd in the multitude being that we were the only ones putting on strange clothes.

Uya come and see reaction. Girls are unbelievable. She ran to me and jumped into me. *Come and see hug o.* Everybody started looking at us. She accompanied her hold on me with some shouts made up of 'see my ID boyfriend'

Biology said 70% of the body is made up of water. For me at that moment, the remaining 30% was pure shyness. I couldn't look at her face talk more of the public looking. Even James self couldn't hold himself. He tried to walk away but I used my eye to beg him to stay.

That same moment, I tried to figure out what she meant by calling me ID card boyfriend. The thing was beginning to do me somehow. I began to wonder. If I was this important to this girl, why has she never made an attempt to look for me or was this all just for nothing?

Well, time will tell. She finally let go of me and we walked back to our hall.

I made her sit down for talks but she told me they still have something to do in their department. With the available time, I asked her where she has been and she claimed her phone got lost. Ahhh. I had no option than believe her. She even confessed how much she has missed me and all this and that.

To not waste her time, I re-collected her number and she went to meet her mates.

As usual, Henry started burying me. He explained to me how foolish I become whenever I see Joy. Then I replied,

BECAUSE OF ANN

'If staying with Joy is foolishness, ahhh, please leave me, I'm satisfied being a fool'.

Life continued. Since getting back Joy, I've remained in touch with her. I called her almost every day but she never called if I don't. I didn't mind anyway because I wasn't looking for who will call me. At intervals, we did meet and spend some time together in school.

For reasons I don't even know, I kept the knowledge of Joy away from Ann. Maybe it was because Joy never asked me about Ann. I was able to balance the friendship with the two girls. My belief was that one day, they will unite with each other.

Now to academics. We were the vice HOD of the department. There was just so much confidence. The level at which I attend to my books at home reduced drastically. My back bone was that as far as I was in class, there was nothing explained that I won't understand and there was no reason for me to miss class. Unlike before, this time, when I get home, I take my bath and relax my head. I read when I felt like. Maybe once in one week. Even when I try to read, I look at my book and conclude there was nothing to read. My confidence was that two weeks to exam, I can revise everything. It was good for me. I now had time for myself. Time to do nothing actually.

School is never complete if you don't do other things. School is not all about book and knowledge. It is the best time to learn other life virtues both the good and the bad. Since the semester came alive, so many things have happened. Some were ignored because the story is not going there. But maybe, we will need little of it later.

Flash back

The first week I resumed the semester, being that they took us to a smaller hall, I was able to see everybody very well unless they didn't come to school at all. It was almost natural that I noticed a cute little amazing strong girl always sitting at the back. She was only in class when it's time for lecture and she doesn't talk with anybody especially guys as I noticed.

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At times that she's in class and lecture is going on, I make faces for people sitting at the back but in most cases, it looked like I was directing it to her. She would smile at those cases and demonstrate with her hand that I should face my front. It was fun knowing that I was a problem to her. We never talked. It was just the lecture time fun and after it, we pretend like nothing happened.

After James noticed how much I disturb the girl, he told me he once knew something about the girl back in first semester and that he believes her quietness and sitting at the back was unusual. Hearing it, the thought that she might be passing through hardship came into me.

I took it upon me to find out what was wrong with her. Little by little, I started forcing myself on her. She never wanted me to get close but I had to use my head. It didn't take me so much time, I was able to get at least her attention when I wanted. I got to know her name and some little things about her. Her name was Ifeyinwa but many people preferred calling her Ify. For me, if it was time for calling names, I have it so I was very comfortable calling her full name, Ifeyinwa.

As time went by, I made her trust me and one fateful day, I asked her what her dark days was all about. She explained everything to me which made me almost regret asking. Her condition needed encouragement, love, care, attention, commitment, understanding, wisdom, knowledge and everything that one could offer to mankind. I know I'm a bad person but I'm not that good in leaving people in problem. Trying to be myself, I took it as a duty to make sure she survives and overcome her problem.

She was an intelligent girl but due to circumstances above her and silly mistakes that she made, she had a result too poor for her person and she was already giving up on school.

So like I told you, she needed all good things that could be given but my problem with her was that she was stubborn and difficult but I was still trying to do my nest.

We will talk about this later.

Back to the present.

BECAUSE OF ANN

All my life, I have always tried to be a happy person no matter what comes my way. To achieve that, I just try to smile and make people smile.

Life continued that way for me. School was being fun amidst its stress. Me and my friends, we just had a unique way of making fun for ourselves. For others, school play activities were going on ranging from tribal days to organisational days.

So one of those days, I called Joy and asked her how she was doing and she gave a positive reply. It was a Saturday morning so I asked her what her plans for the day was and she said she will be at home all day but will come to community town hall in the evening. I was very happy hearing that being that I have told her I live at the back of the town hall.

For my mind, Joy dey come my house.

Drama Loading...

I left to school for our normal Saturday maths class. All my time in school was just like I was being forced to stay. All I wanted was to go home and prepare for Joy. Finally, we were let go by 11. I got home, put somethings in order and started exercising patience. While premier league matches were going on, I took as a challenge that the devil was a liar.

There was no way I was going to leave home so that later I will hear '*I came but you didn't dey,*' after all, Man Utd wasn't playing.

By 2pm, I called her again. She confirmed she will still come but not that 2pm time. I took it calmly and continued my wait. I even slept and woke to meet time at 3:30. I called her and she said she was already preparing. I was as cool as a man who just gained salvation.

In a short time, the evening was already falling. I was still in my patience mode waiting for this girl. Trying to maintain courtesy I allowed her have herself. What do I mean? I decided to stop disturb her with calls. She will let me know when she get to the town-hall after all, it's my house she's coming to so she will call me when she's tired of waiting for my call.

Na so *o*. Time passed 4:30pm and my phone was already displaying 5pm. Ahhh. From my home, I could hear drum beats from the town-hall. Because of tribal days, students of diverse tribes do come for practice and their only centre is the

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town-hall. I was getting tired already. The main issue now was that her number was connecting but she wasn't picking my call. Dull me, I lifted myself from my house and went to the town-hall to see things for myself expecting to see her there when she comes if she hadn't.

I got confused when I got there. The crowd was as if Jesus Christ was teaching. The only difference was the drum sounds and local songs coming from different angles from different tribes. The major rehearsal there was for dancing; traditional dance to be precise. I saw my tribal group in one corner but I showed no concern. Dancing was not my thing.

I continued dialling Joy's number as I observed the environment but she wasn't still taking her calls.

At a lucky moment, I sighted Joy in the multitude. She was looking much more beautiful than the Joy I use to see; looking smart in her pink gown. She was walking towards my direction but I was sure she didn't see me. Like Jet Li, I excellently withdrew myself from the scene. I went back, now waiting for her to call me. After waiting for like 20 minutes, I decided to call her myself. It kept ringing but she wasn't responding. It was beginning to mean something else. I blamed myself for running away the first time.

I humbly rushed back to the scene. When I got there, I stood at my previous spot and started searching for her for the second time. I eye searched for more than 5 minutes but it wasn't working for me. As funny as life was, Ann saw me. She ran to me and we greeted. She asked why I was standing there and I told her I was looking for somebody. I said some silly things that made her leave me alone. Immediately she left, I saw Joy afar off. My courage was that all the moments, I didn't see her with any guy. This time around, I wasn't willing to miss my opportunity. I walked straight to where she was and Nollywood acting began.

I was walking very slowly and cold so as to send the message to her that I was not happy with her.

Immediately she saw me, she ran to me and happily, she jumped on me in a tight hug. She kept shouting 'my ID card boyfriend o' 'my ID card boyfriend o'. She was already gaining people's attention in the crowd.

BECAUSE OF ANN

I didn't know the devil that was in me. Upon all her jumping and shouting, I kept quiet and acted like I wasn't seeing her. I just stood like a wood and kept looking at her.

In the next second, I got the shock of my life. That event brought about the slang '*I go change am for you*'. Joy changed it for me. She let go of me and started firing me.

What is it *sef*? I'm talking to you and you're acting as if I'm nobody. Look at how you're fooling me in public. *Shuo, which level be that na?*

I got the strength and fired back at her

'What were you expecting? I've been calling you since and you ignored my call. Is this my house you said you were coming to? If you were me, how will you feel?'

Joy: See my phone (pointing the old tecno phone to me) e nor dey ring out, I nor ignore the call intentionally. But see this guy o. I say I dey come town-hall. I tell you say I dey come your house? I dey talk to you, you dey bone me, for wetin na? I be your girlfriend?

I watched helplessly and mute as Joy kept ranting. We formed a scene already as a good number of people gathered to look at us. The pain about it was that she kept shouting. I became totally ashamed of myself and felt dried.

At a point, a girl came and took her away.

I stopped feeling myself. I've never been washed that way since I started my life. Joy made me empty. After about 2 minutes, I gained myself. Tears were building in my eye but I was in public so I had to respect myself. I walked out of the busy scene feeling dead. On my way out, I sighted Ann. I tried very well to make sure she doesn't see me and I went home straight.

When I got home, time was already 6pm. Everything looked like it was not existing. The Joy thing totally changed view about myself. I felt like I was nothing. I never knew I could be that humiliated in public to the extent that I couldn't say anything.

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That night, I slept without eating.

Even the night was nothing near good. I just switched off my phone and locked myself inside to stay away from human.

I had a rethink of myself and diverse thoughts started coming. Some like I should hate women for ever but thank God for His intervention.

The next day brought a Sunday.

During service, God blessed me with happiness. I came back from church very happy coupled with the feeling I get when I know I have a Man Utd match to watch.

It looked like I have forgotten all that happened just the previous day and I was happy it seemed so at least.

Chapter 5

It was just a marvellous Sunday. The same feeling was in me till Monday. I

just woke up happy and light. I prepared for school singing like somebody who won bet the last night and knows he will get his money today.

Little did I know that a journey was waiting for me in school.

Well, let's get to it.

That Monday, I got to school with James. The student's break was over and lecture set to continue amidst other school activities.

At one end of the class, I sat with James and Ify and together we listened to the lass talk about the concluded Rector's cup. It was then I heard that we lost in a penalty shoot-out against Mass Communication. On a normal day, I will be the one to bully the guy who missed the penalty but it wasn't a normal day because I played the same competition and gave an awful performance. I just smiled seeing the display of the saying, 'When you don't succeed, you are a child of just your parents'

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Time was already 9:37am and it was getting clear that our lecturer was not going to come. From nowhere, Henry appeared in the class carrying a file. He sighted us sitting and came to meet us. With the way he looked like someone looking for employment, we quickly asked him where he was coming from. He explained that he is processing the submission of his school file. We waved it off telling him we can submit ours at any time.

With the way the class was divided into groups, some conversing, others studying, I decided to use the time to tell them my story with Joy.

In a short time, I finished feeding their ears and all they could do was laugh hard at me. James was about to comment on the issue when a group of guys marched into the class.

Looking at them, it was easy to see that they came for political awareness and self-advertisement as we have seen their type plenty times. People like me, James and Henry never listen to such announcements. We only act when they start throwing sweet; you know that kind thing.

We were ready to pay deaf ear to them until James called our attention. He pointed to a very fair guy in the group to be his secondary school classmate back in Saint Patrick College Asaba popularly called SPC.

For his selfish reason, he asked to listen to the group. That was how we stopped our gist to listen to a political group just because James' classmate is among them.

After trying to get the people's attention to the best of their ability, the group leader started talking. The leader was a gentle dark tall handsome guy who introduced himself as Joshua something. Some idiots in our department started hailing him from different corners 'iRobot', 'iRobot'. This made the whole thing more interesting. The guys were pleased and took time to explain to us what brought them to our department.

After beating round the bush with sweet words and a show of responsibility, they introduced themselves as aspirants for different SUG positions. The leader of the group said of himself that he was going for the position of the Financial Secretary and he gave room to others to speak for themselves. The first person that spoke was the said James classmate. Me and Henry were already laughing at the guy believing that he won't go for something better than P.R.O. putting on James that

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people around him don't go far, just to annoy him. We were dumbfounded when the guy introduced himself as E.J.O, the very name James called him and said to the house that he was aspiring for the office of the SUG President. Ahhh, James shouted and hailed him. We sat down speechless and watched James laugh at us in a full show of pride and happiness.

Other guys and babes in the group introduced themselves and then the Leader guy continued.

He explained to us that their coming was to form partnership with our department and then to educate us on what we don't know about the Student Union Government so as to make sure we are not denied our right or get cheated. In a bid to tell us what we don't know, he explained that the government is made up of the Executive and Legislative arm. After explaining what the two arms meant and their functions, he made it clear that the legislative arm is made up of a student from every department and we should make sure to send a student from our department to go and represent us.

In a nutshell, we got their message and was very happy them. They left us with a promise to come and check our progress concerning the selection of a representative.

Not quite long after they left, some other guys came for some political talks. It was turn to celebrate a friend when I saw Prince-will in the group. Prince-will, the guy I met at Redemption camp and reunited with just at the end of first semester.

The group introduced themselves as NADESSTU office aspirants. They only projected one guy to us as an aspirant for presidency.

Prince-will sighted me in the class and came to meet me. He asked that we go outside to discuss so I followed him. There he told me so many things in a short time. He explained their team was coming to save the association from weakness and would reward anybody who becomes a part of their success story. I asked him which position he was going for but he said he don't stay in office that he back people up that if I even need help, he will be there for me as far as it's a political issue. The whole thing interested me. I then told him as for my department, I will try my best to win it for him.

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He looked happy even when I hadn't done anything yet. The other members of the team came outside and he told me to follow them. He introduced me to them as his selected front man of the department. The guys seemed very willing to serve me and collected my number.

I felt so huge as I watched them walk away. The feeling that I should involve myself in something serious came into me. I was still standing and thinking when James and Henry accompanied by Ify came to ask if I was okay. I told them I was trying to settle something.

We went back into the class and then discussion began. A guy said since the SUG group said the department need to produce a representative that it should be done immediately. Somebody who should be sent then a reply came quickly suggesting election.

Everybody agreed and our course rep stood up and said anybody who has interest should indicate so that the election can commence.

The whole thing was looking too speedy so I suggested that they let people go home at least if they want to campaign, they will have the opportunity to do so. Everyone agreed again and postponed the election to the next day.

I was just not comfortable at school for reasons best known to me. By 2pm, we were sure school for the day was over. Without wasting time, I called James and Henry and went home straight.

They noticed the seriousness in me and immediately we sat down inside my room, they asked what my problem was and I said to them, 'I want to be the department's representative'

There was a different level of quietness in the room immediately. The first person to talk was James.

'It's good *sha*. I was even planning to go for it myself,' he said.

Me: So what are we going to do? Should we both go and try ourselves?

James: No, we may end up dividing our fans and loose on both end.

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Me: That's true.

James: *Nor worry. Since na you first talk, we dey your back. If you are there, I believe I'm there.*

Henry: (nonchalantly): *Hmmm. I advise make una forget these things make we face school.*

James: Guy forget. It is part of school. If you can't do it now, we can't do it anywhere.

Me: That's true. I know his fear. It's not going to be brutal.

Henry: *I know say na una village people dey push una and una mind don dey made up. When time come, make una nor talk say I nor talk o.*

Me: So are you backing out of the game?

Henry: I can't leave you guys so I'm in but remember that I warned.

James: It's okay. Let's plan now.

We checked the people in the department who could possibly demand of the position and we counted the possible number of people who could be for them.

There were real threats but we encouraged ourselves with the fact that if we don't win the election, we have nothing to lose after all we are spending nothing and there's no harm in trying.

We agreed to deal with it. We parted ways taking it on ourselves to make as much supporters as possible. If we can't convince them, we confuse them.

The next day, we got to school all prepared. We divided ourselves and started talking to members of the department.

In a political game, everybody claims to be your team mate just to be on your good record but will score an own goal for you and pretend it was a mistake.

I had no problem with anybody I spoke to. They will even cut me short with

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'Ossai, if na you, no problem,'

I got confidence and stopped campaigning. I called my friends together and they reported they were expecting something positive.

We finished our first period around 11am. After some time, before we knew it, our course rep announced that anybody ready to be sent as a representative should come to the front of the class. Before one could say Jack Robinson, about 12 people were already at the front of the class.

I asked myself if the whole thing is even serious. How can 15 in a department of 84 students go and contest for a single post. Something came to my mind and told me to forget the whole thing, it wasn't for me. Even people I told to vote for me are already out to be voted for.

The next thing, James asked me,

'You still dey sit down?'

I told him what was in my mind and he took it like I was disappointing him. I couldn't hold it any longer when even Henry said I was nearing an idiot.

I got inspired, ready and energized. I took myself to the front of the class. It was then I looked back to the class and saw that half of the department was not in class.

I tried making a complain but the people present said they were not waiting for anybody and nobody argued. I was already worried. 70% of people outside were my real people that without campaign, they will be there.

I was as worried that I went back to tell James my observation but he encouraged me by telling me I can't give up now.

I swallowed hard and went back to my position. Without wasting time o, our Assistant course rep wrote down our names and we were sent outside, heart beating like that of someone who's pushing Rashford or Gareth Bale.

Outside, we tried to bring down our blood pressure by talking with each other, trying to make fun of the election, by saying the position was not important.

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In a short time, we were all called inside and made to still line up in the front of the class.

Lo and behold, our Assistant Course Rep, a girl I call both Ronaldo and Neymar because how well she plays football started announcing the result. Even in my high blood pressure, I couldn't help but laugh when some people's children were announced to have zero vote. I haven't heard my score but I knew I can't be zero.

When I heard my name, I stopped feeling myself. There is nothing like peace of mind o. Beautifully, I was announced to have a count of 14 heads. The good thing about it was that it was the joint highest vote with one other guy. All the hour, for no reason, James and Henry were seating together and we were acting like we were strangers to each other.

Being a tie, the people called for a re-vote between the two of us.

It was more difficult because people who didn't see you good enough before will now have to vote for you if you must win.

In a department filled with people who know how to make people prove their worth, we were told that before the voting can take place, we will have to tell them what kind of representatives we would be for them. *See wahala o*. That was the day I knew there was difference between formal and informal talks. A class that I comfortably stand and whatever I like, the atmosphere changed immediately and everything became different. It looked like I was going to play a penalty in the front of 80000 fans.

On my preference, the other guy asked to speak first. Come and see talk o.

The guy started babbling, telling the class how he will do unimaginable things; he will buy foolscap sheet for any test in the department, he will pay their bus fair (N100, to and fro) for 2 weeks and other funny things.

I was shocked when I saw the people shouting and hailing him. I roughly calculated what he just promised them and it was worth close to 1 million naira. I smiled when I looked at the people and saw a bunch of fools.

Soon it was my turn to speak. They didn't even want to hear me speak. The few cool headed people had to beg them to stay calm. What the guy told them was enough for them, they said they can't ask for more.

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I was already giving up on leading people who could be deceived so easily. At last, they agreed to shut their mouth to hear from me.

My humble self, I went on a sincere ground and told them I can't promise them something of 1 million naira when I know I can't deliver it, and that doing that is just a way of buying their head and conscience and that I can't deceive them. I went ahead to tell them what I have and can give to them is true leadership and make sure they are represented the best way at any level and then that I will be ready to hear and stand by their cry at any time; then I ended my speech.

Some people clapped, some cheered. Then we were asked to go outside for election to old.

Outside, the guy came to meet me and told me not to worry that he is not ready for the position that he is just doing everything for fun insisting that if he wins, he will step down. He looked serious saying it but my mind told me not to trust his words, they were wash.

In a short time, a guy smilingly came to call us. I tried to read his face but I got nothing. Immediately we entered the class, I heard people hailing the guy. I looked at James and he waved his head then I gave up.

It was certified when our course rep came out to make the result official. In his words,

'Alright, please let's listen to the result. Kelvin, 22 votes, Shedrack 24 votes. Congratulations Shedrack'

What is it for me?

In life, things don't always come the way we want it and this was one of those things for me. I felt bad about the whole thing, failure is failure, no matter how it appears but I covered it a smile.

The class was all sorts of noise; some idiots came to meet to say they didn't for me because I joke a lot. I wondered how that was bad then they said they fear I may go there and playing pranks. I saw the group of people as fools anyway.

Moments continued. Our course rep came to me to say he don't want me to back out that they still need my help. I asked him what he meant and he

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told me the Shedrack of a guy was yet to see his result and that he will need me to accompany the both of them to the Exam Officer's office.

What's my own inside, I asked.

Then he replied 'the guy never pay school fee so he nor go fit see him result but I dey hope say if you explain the election thing give the lecturer, he go just consider tell am wetin him GP be'

It was something I wasn't supposed to do but I didn't want it to look like somebody was difficult so I accepted following them.

We got to the man's office in Engineering complex but he wasn't around. I was too tired to trek from Engineering complex back to New Hall 3; so I told them to go that I will stay back.

Five minutes later, probably when the other guys got to class without me, James called me and asked about my whereabouts. After telling him I didn't want to come to class, he told me to come and meet them at auditorium. The next 5 minutes saw me there. They (James, Henry and Ify) were already there waiting for me. Immediately I entered, Henry and Ify started laughing. I didn't know when I started smiling. I knew it was because of the election thing. Not like it didn't pain him but we were just a **team make fun of anything we are facing** and I liked it a lot. If you're too serious with life, you won't enjoy anything. After a few minutes of mockery and gist. We decided to get serious.

James started by telling me I missed it when I addressed the class that I should have also mentioned huge things that I can't do even as the SUG president. I saw reasons with him. The people didn't use their head during the whole thing. That was when I knew there is this something in politics that makes reasonable people brainless.

In a short time, we were over the whole odd feeling. Myself, I felt like nothing ever happened. We spent time talking about other things before we decided to leave school.

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The next day at school brought something we've never seen. There were different campaign teams roaming from class to class to look for who will vote for them. This made us feel even more serious about getting our chosen representative ready. Together with him and the course rep, we went in search of our Exam officer again and this time around, we were successful.

Immediately we knocked and opened his door, his AC breeze welcomed us. Without wasting time, we greeted him and went straight to business.

After we've explained our journey to him. He laughingly said how can we be foolish enough to choose somebody we don't know his status to be our rep. We played along and laughed with him. At the end, he said it was against school policy to disclose result to an unqualified person that if he can't provide his school fee receipt that he can't be shown his result.

One thing was sure. If he doesn't get to know his result or he sees it and it's not up to requirement, he will step down and I will go in his place but I didn't know why I kept wishing him well. With a sincere heart, I started working on how the guy could see his result on time and also prayed it be a good enough result.

The guy said he has paid his school fee but yet to get his receipt. We went to bursary to see how we could get it but all proved abortive. So I asked him if he had a duplicate of his teller and he said he did. I asked him to bring it the next day that maybe, the Exam Officer will consider us.

So the next day, the guy brought the teller with his name and amount of money paid clearly showing on it. At noon when we got free from lectures, we transported ourselves from New Hall 3 to Engineering complex where the man's office was.

Getting to his office, we started by telling him long stories of how we went to bursary and things yet worked just to make him feel for us. But the ever funny man asked

'So wetin una want make I do, I dey work for bursary?'

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I smiled and told him that we have the teller with us and that he should consider helping us.

He collected the teller and smiled while reading through it. After seeing what he was looking for, he gave us back the teller and without even turning on his laptop, he told us the guy's GP. This man should be exchanged for a bottle of Pepsi. He knew the GP all these while but won't tell us. It was a bad news but not that bad. At least, for personal reasons, he will be glad he recorded no carry over but the other way round, his GP was not up to expectation.

I even felt it more than the guy. He didn't look like he lost anything.

We thanked the lecturer and took our exit. Immediately we stepped outside, the guy shook hands with me and told me to get ready that I will do the work. I never expected him to be such an easy and free person. The unbelievable came when he told me not to worry that he will sponsor my purchase of form. I thanked his kind gesture but still took it as wash. Me, I don't believe in promises. People can fail at any time so when they fail and I didn't believe them at the first place, it gives me no or less pain.

We went straight to our venue of lectures and called everyone inside. For the first time, I saw that department very serious.

They were eager to hear what we had to say and then the guy asked the course rep to stay back that he will make the announcement himself; then he bounced out.

After making some speeches, he opened the bag and the cat came out.

'Nor be quarrel, nor be anger, nor be disappointment, nor be anything, I dey him back, so I dey tell una now say my guy here, Kelvin Ossai don become our new flag bearer and I want everybody to support him'.

'Anybody get complain?', he asked.

'No wahala,' the department chorused. This was how the journey started.

In groups, the people scattered. Some were matching outside, some were going home direct, there were others whose routine was, come to school, receive lecture, then go and process school file for submission. These people looked more like serious students.

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People like me were there waiting to submit all files at once in final year. There were also the guys that came to congratulate me. There were also those who came to challenge me to do well for them. I just kept smiling knowing I don't have a single idea of where I was going to but then, I was willing to do well with it.

We were going to have a fixed lecture by 3pm so those willing to learn had to look for somewhere they would keep themselves till time.

Together with Henry, James and Ify, I went to spend my own time in a cool part of the school auditorium. Our hood was upstairs, almost opposite New Hall 2 from which we can see anybody coming in or leaving. It was always a good view because we would have a good number of people to *yab*, laugh and *dab* (I can rhyme better than Falz, lol).

So we got there and as expected, we started using words to describe the whole progression. Ify bought 2 bottles of zobo and some biscuits to keep our stomach happy for longer. She can be that much of a nice person until she decides to be difficult.

There were no too many plans to make. The only thing was money to purchase form and then face screening. I told them how the other guy promised to support my purchase of form. My friends being like me told me to forget about him and make sure I get my money ready.

The atmosphere was filled with a unique feeling, that of fulfilment.

At 3pm, we retired to class for lecture. The department was back to what it used to be. Everywhere looked like nothing ever happened.

We finished the class minutes after 4pm and everybody dispersed their own way. It was late already so nobody followed me home. On getting home, I sat down to review myself if I was really capable of what I was involving myself in. A good percentage of me agreed with the deal and I challenged myself to take the bull by its horn.

Later that evening, Ann came around. Being that I live close to a bank, she said she came to make withdrawal and felt it right to come and see me. Actually, I was happy seeing her. For some days, we haven't seen each other.

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At late evening, I saw her off to her compound. I didn't want her to walk alone at such a busy evening. My plan was to just get to her compound and go my way back home. That changed when I met her friends at her place. They accused me of hiding myself from them. To prove I was innocent of their claim, I stayed with them much longer than I had in mind. By 9pm, I couldn't stay any longer and after much conviction, they agreed to let me go.

I got home around 9:30pm and straight ahead, I went to sleep.

Now let's talk about academics. I don't miss school, I don't miss lectures, I do my assignments but talk of spending extra time with my books, it was a huge task for me. Reading my books was boring when I believe I know everything written in it when it was taught in class. The only positive impact I made about studies was in the life of Ify. I always tried to make sure she felt concerned about her book. I tried to make sure she read and did other academic activities which sometimes would work and at times all efforts will be multiplied by zero. I was just like a man who says, 'do what I say but don't do what I do' but my confidence kept me going.

The next morning brought a Thursday. I didn't have much time to think the previous day so I laid still in bed trying to calculate, check and balance things.

I picked up my phone, dialled my course rep and he picked on the first ring. I wanted to know if the form was on sale already and how much it was being sold. He told me sales had started and that he will verify the price when he gets to school.

After I ended the call, my calculation became a bit complex because I didn't yet know the amount of thousands the form would cost.

After thinking for a while, I remembered I was used to finding x and y . I took the price of the form to be x and started my calculation. At the end of checking my account balance and money at hand, I found out that the only money I could release if I don't want to beg for food before I go home was N3000. In my little mind, I prayed that the form's price doesn't exceed the money I could afford.

Having done nothing, I was still at home doing nothing when James came already dressed for school. I wanted to apologise for being the way I was but he told me to

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stay calm that he was in no hurry to get to school. I saw reasons with him because our 9am activity in school was practical and the department wasn't serious about the course's practical in particular. So we just settled ourselves for 11am lecture.

To complement our stay, Henry bounced in from nowhere, sweating. We thought someone was chasing him then he said he was rushing to meet us at home. I asked why he didn't call me to ask me to wait and he said my line was not reachable. I picked my phone and checked, there was no network meanwhile other people had network. I rebooted the phone and network came in. A message followed almost immediately. I opened it and it read,

'I dey call you since, your number nor connect. Try see me for school today'

I didn't know the tune of the text if it was urgent or normal timing.

I concluded that whatever it was, was of more importance to him and will meet him anytime I find myself in school.

At home I told James and Henry the amount of money I had available for any form of any kind and they told me to forget about it that anything the form wants to cost, let it cost. High spirit, ginger guys. I understood their ordeal and made to prepare for school.

Immediately we got to school gate, Ify called. She queried if we were not coming to school then I smiled and told her we won't, just to put a smile on her face when she finally sees us.

It worked. Immediately we entered class, I caught her smiling at the far end of the class. I was going to meet her when my course rep interrupted,

'Kelv come come come'

Me: *Wetin happen?* Good morning.

Course rep (also Kelvin): *Good morning. Na one guy o. He say he wan see you once you come school.*

Me: *Who the guy be?*

Kelvin: *Na him dey the position wey you dey go for so.*

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Me: *So na graduating student?*

Kelvin: Yeah.

Me: *So where him dey?*

Kelvin: *Wait make I call am.*

I waited as he dialled the guy's number. After they talked for some seconds, the call was ended then he said to me, '*He dey the entrance of this building, make we go meet am.*'

Then I followed him without telling any of my friends. Immediately we got to the said entrance, the guy came to meet us. He slowed his footstep when he saw me.

I looked directly to his eyes to make sure he remembered me well then he stammered to my course rep

'Na the guy be this?'

'Yeah' my course rep humbly replied. Then I greeted him and he and he I asked the common question '*How you dey?*'

'*I dey fine,*' I answered nonchalantly. This created a new feeling in him as I observed. He was successful in trying to gain his composure and hide all of his feelings. Then we began talking

Guy: *Na you the department select abi?*

Me: Yeah.

Guy: *Wetin be your name?*

Me: Kelvin.

Guy: *Two of una na the same name?* (referring to my course rep beside me)

Kelvin: *Nor mind am. Im thief my name.*

I just smiled not wanting to talk much.

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Guy: *You know my name abi?*

Me: *Nor be you be Marcus?*

Marcus: *Yes. Na my name be that. So how far, you don buy the form?*

Me: *Not yet. I go soon go buy am.*

Marcus: *But una nor try o. How una go conduct election, una nor tell us. Nor be even single permission. Una neglect us o.*

(For my mind, *who he help?*)

Kelvin: *Abeg nor vex, the thing dey urgent na im make.*

Marcus: *No wahala sha. Ehmmm Kelvin(me) give me your number. We need talk later.*

I gave him my number and watched him walk away. Hmmm Marcus. He was one of the biggest problem I faced the previous semester.

Flashback

After me, Ann and Joy had collected our ID cards from the ID card centre, the next thing was to collect our admission letter from the same centre just like every other student. The problem with ours was that due to one excuse, the letter wasn't available and we were asked to come for it later with our ID cards. This time around, I was going for the letter alone because Ann had collected hers and Joy was out of my reach. So one of those days, I went to the centre, after one hot afternoon lecture. I was tired but just had to go get it. On getting to the centre, I saw people scattered everywhere. The gathering looked strange but I felt less concerned. The entrance to the room was clear. I felt the people who were processing their ID card that day were mature enough as to coordinate themselves and even allow the workers have breathing space. Well, I had no business with people outside because only people concerned with ID card queue. I could see some students already inside doing one thing or the other. I made my way to walk straight inside to ask if the letter was available.

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Immediately I stepped my foot into the entrance of the open room, one of the students inside rushed me, *'You dey crase? You nor dey see your mates for outside?'*

Still standing there, I tried to explain to him in low tone that I only came to ask if my admission letter was ready. Before one could say Paul Pogba, this guy pushed me so hard that I had to put in all concentration to maintain my stamina.

Some people who saw the whole thing happen threw words at the guy. Another guy came from inside and said that I was claiming mighty as little as I was because I was in a small group, *I don get mind.*

I looked at the two guys and rage grew in me. I hated being addressed as a cultist most especially when it's coming from one. I lost myself. Me knowing how crazy I can be after losing myself, I just left the centre back to my class.

The only people I told what I encountered were James and Henry and soon we forgot about it.

Two weeks later, then exam had started. At the same building where we stay to read, the place I once invited Ann and her friends to; we were playing table tennis with the long tables there after our first exam in the morning. A guy dressed smartly came from nowhere and said he wanted to play. We welcomed him because he was also a student of electrical engineering but a year 2 student. We were playing tournament. After some rounds of game, the guy made it to final. He was very good at the game. Being a final, we all stood by the corner to watch the battle of bat between this guy and James. At a point, the ball jumped of the table and run across my side. I was surprised when this guy came to pick the ball and deliberately climbed my feet. It looked strange. I didn't see any reason for him to step on me.

He was the same guy that his friend pushed me in ID card centre and all he could say was refer to me as a cultist.

I took it hard on him. I asked him the meaning of what he just did with anger written on my face. I saw an idiot when the guy answered me

'Me and you nor be same level'

KELVIN OSSAI

Me: *Na im go make you come match me?*

Guy: *Uya come beat me na.*

Me: *I nor know wetin I do you. The other day na for ID card centre, today, na for here. E still get day wey you come invigilate us for test and you still take me do anyhow. Who you think say you be self?*

Guy: *I pass you na. Level wey I get for this school, for your life, you nor fit get am, and till you leave this school, no lecturer fit carry you go invigilate test.*

His words sounded challenging and condemning but I had to maintain my worth. Then I said to him, 'I rather stay without invigilating any test than do and hide under lecturers to pass my exams.'

It pained him so much that he said I was insulting him and wanted to start a fight with me if not for the people around that intervened.

Since then, we give each other hard looks whenever we pass or meet each other. And unfortunately, that guy is Marcus.

Back to the present.

And now Marcus is leaving the position I'm going to. So I'm already matching the level he said I will never get to. I've forgotten about it before but now that I remembered. I think I can say it's a minus to him. I saw the shame written on his face. But why did he collect my number?

Anyway, that's his problem. Someone has already started talking with my ever busy course rep. That guy can serve for Africa. I left him and went to meet my friends and told them how Marcus collected my number. They saw it as a normal thing and reminded me I haven't met with the guy that texted me to try see him when I get to school. On my own I thought it that I even needed to see Prince-will for personal reasons. Then I dialled his number and he picked.

'Where are you?' he asked me.

I told him my whereabouts and he told me to come and meet him at LHC block. I told my friends to accompany me and they agreed without hesitating.

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We were already on our way out of class when I heard somebody calmly call at me. When we turned, it was Shedrack and three

other strange guys.

We walked back to meet up with them halfway. We shared the normal Nigerian guy pleasantries which was a stylish hand shake. Afterwards, Shedrack asked me how much I've done about purchase of form and I told him I was yet to buy it. He asked if I know the price and was disappointed when I said no. He advised I should be smart in doing anything I want to. Just when we were about to leave, he brought out his wallet and picked 4 pieces of NGN500 notes and handed it over to me. Then he said, *'The form na 5K. Just manage this 2K from me and try buy the form as soon as possible make you know say that one don finish'*

It was difficult to believe his gesture. People of his kind are hardly found in Nigeria. Words were not enough but I managed to manage them and voiced my appreciation to him.

On a last note, he introduced me to the three guys that were with him as the person he had told them about. I had another handshake with them without even knowing what they were told about me. The three guys all had hard palms and only one managed to smile when I made some jokes.

My friends were awed by what they saw. Seeing the guy, no one will know he is that good. Supporting me to that extent even when I was taking his place because of circumstances that enveloped him. He just earned my respect., not because of the money but because of the events that surrounded his giving. In football, we call his type 'world-class'.

Again, the money was just what I needed. The form was 5k and I already had 3k so the 2k was perfect.

We parted ways with Team Shedrack and headed towards Prince-will. Getting to LHC block, I dialled his number. He didn't pick the call; he just came out from LHC3 and waved at me. We went to meet him and he took us into the hall he was before and asked us to seat. He first questioned the profile of the two people I came with and I told him they were my friends. Right there, he asked me in our native language if I trust them and I told him as much as 99.9%. The discussion was brought to English as he continued.

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He asked me how far I have gone in working for him in my department as I earlier told him.

Myself knowing very well that I've done nothing but can easily do something, I told him everything was in control because no other person aspiring for the position has come to the department.

Then Prince-will asked me to be sincere to him about if I was really influential. I don't know what he was to say next so with wisdom, I placed myself on the fence so that I can easily jump to any side.

Then he asked me if I can give him an assurance of at least 20 votes from my department stressing that the real problem is how the people will come to school on the day of election.

One may think 20 votes is too small but believe me, if you get 20 votes from each levels of every department, you will win any election in DSPG.

What he was demanding was not too much. I can easily convince or confuse 20 people into coming to school on the day of election and they will for sure vote for the man I support after making them believe even what the man cannot do. So I told him my hand was on deck and I won't fail him. He seemed okay with what I told him and asked further, 'Has your department elected a representative?'

He had more believe in me when he heard I was the one elected. He also advised me to go and buy form as early as possible for some reasons he didn't say. Before we left, the guy gave us NGN500. The whole thing was becoming interesting and there was no single thought of going back.

For the form stuff, I didn't bring my 3k to school so it became a work for the next day. As early as 1pm, we decided to go home. It was still an early hour of the day so Ify decided to go home with us. On our way out, we met Ann also going home with her friends. We shared smiles before she announced to me that she would come to my place later in the day.

We all entered the same bus and made everyone in the bus enjoy their NGN50 by throwing funny jokes at them. When we got home, the clock was saying 1:38pm. And the afternoon was hot. From the NGN500 Prince-will gave to us, we bought 2 bottles of cold Pepsi that they didn't even let me drink. James and Ify agreed to

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share one and Henry that I was supposed to share one with told me it was my campaign gift to him and ran away with it only to come back with an empty bottle. I told him thunder will fire him but he thought it was a joke. Look at him now, on the day we wrote our last exam in final year, his charger was stolen.

Around 5pm, after eating and making noise, everyone had to go at once. 20 minutes after they've left, I felt bored. I tried doing things online but social media looked worse. When I couldn't bear it any longer, I decided to visit bet9ja shop close by to watch people lose their virtual bet and also charge my phone. When I got there, it seemed it wasn't yet time for games as people were just few there. All the okada boys were still hustling for money. Once it's 7 o'clock, they will come and give the money to bet9ja. I looked for a good position and sat down.

There were two guys already seated there discussing. I didn't want to listen to their conversation but it kept coming to my ear. I couldn't resist it when I heard the name of Prince-will from them. They said he thinks he can do anything he likes in the school but that they are going to let him know he's young in the game.

I didn't really know what they are talking about but I was sure Prince-will already knew them. I didn't know their names either but there was something I could do to have a report I can give to Prince-will, then I decided to do it.

I opened my phone camera and pretended I was just checking something. They were too serious to notice me. Immediately I had their face to my camera, I tapped the snap command. I ran out of luck and bad enough, the flash light beamed on them.

What a mistake.

As expected, the two guys gazed at me with only one still managing to talk but slowly. I made calculations and understood that the guy that was still talking didn't take it seriously while the other guy read meaning into it. The only pertinent thing in my mind was to risk being smart. I brought my phone close to my eyes like I was examining why it flashed light in the first place.

Then I followed my action with a simple and light word,

'Sorry'.

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It was perfect and I won the game. That simple word was very crucial in winning the game. Sometimes, to be a good liar, you don't talk much, you say a short word. Long words (i.e trying to explain in details) when you're lying make sensitive people have the feeling that you're lying.

They continued talking while I tried more to confuse them that it was nothing by taking selfie. The guys were reckless as they continued to blab. I just pretended to be into my phone but I was brain recording every of their conversation. When they felt okay with their plans and views, they changed their discussion topic to football.

At a time, past 6pm, I remembered Ann told me she was going to come. She must have come and didn't meet me at home. Immediately, I unplugged my phone and rushed home. On getting home, I tried to see if there was any note as she always keeps a note each time she comes to my house and I was not around but I didn't see any. I was having the feeling that she got mad that I didn't wait for her and then didn't bother to keep any note. I brought out my phone and dialled her number; it was switched off. I felt guilty but will I kill myself? No.

I opened my door, smiled to my room and lay down on the floor. All that happened in the bet9ja shop started replaying in my head. A part of me was telling me to call Prince-will immediately but the second part discouraged me being that I don't even know their names.

That night, lacking what to do and being also that we contributed money to buy fuel for generator, I decided to read my books. At least to make academic use of the available energy. It was same old story. When I open book, I feel I know it already. I just managed to play around some calculations in my note and when I couldn't waste my time any longer, I went to my next door neighbour's room to join them (others who visited) in watching a movie (Snake in the plane) from his laptop. It was a positive one because I succeeded in keeping myself busy till I felt like sleeping.

The next morning brought a stormy Friday. It looked like the heavens were going to cry all day. I had to prepare for it. I decided to prepare early so that even though the rain starts and refuses to stop, I must have gotten to school already.

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In me, I felt there was something special about the day. I was going to buy the form and again I was going to tell Prince-will what happened plus that I will make sure I see Ann to apologise for disappointing her.

BY 8:30am, I got to school. I met two other jobless guys who came early just to secure a charging space. I was wasting my time making mockery of them until I realised it was going to be a busy day for me.

I got serious at once. The first step I took was dialling James's number. He told me to give him 5 minutes that he was already at the school gate. I dialled Henry too but his wasn't reachable.

I stood outside the class, waiting for James to arrive. When he did, he was with our course rep, Kelvin.

Before I could talk to the James I've been waiting for, Kelvin began, *'You don see who dey look for you?'*

Me: Who?

Kelvin: *Na one guy from Foundry Engineering. He say he wan see our representative and I don even give am your number.*

Me: *Nobody call me o. When you give am the number?*

Kelvin: *This morning. Maybe he go call later. You don buy the form?*

Me: *I go buy am today.*

Kelvin: *Okay, stay strong.*

He walked away while me and James stood to talk. I briefed him of what happened at the bet9ja shop and he supported that Prince-will should hear about it.

Before we could move an inch, my phone started singing Dammy Krane's Amin. It was an incoming call from a strange number. I delayed picking the call just to get a better side of the song. That song tells me that someday, one will make it. When I finally picked the call, a masculine voice came from the other end. The voice was enough evidence that the guy was older than me so when he first greeted me, I knew he needed something from me. After he introduced himself, I found out he was the guy Kelvin just told me about. He asked if I was in school and when I gave

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him a positive reply, he asked to see me. He asked about my location but I declined and told him I will come see him instead. Then he told me he will be waiting at 'Student's Affair' and that I should do well to come as soon as possible.

James heard the conversation so I didn't have to tell him. Together, we embarked on the journey to TETFUND block where Student's Affair is. In a short time, we got there and I dialled the guy's number. He was seeing us already so he came to meet us. Everything was happening fast. The guy looked like he had no time. He asked to confirm if I was from Elect/Elect department and I nodded in affirmation. He then started preaching of how he wants to be the speaker of the house and will need my vote the day we will be sworn in. I asked him to give me a reason he deserves my vote and he said as an engineering student, it's my obligation to bring power to engineering. I smiled and told him I'm with him then he asked if I've bought form and I told him I will buy it same day.

When he learnt that I had the money with me, he told me that I was in the right place that the form is sold just in the student's affair block.

So we walked inside and bought the form.

One of my agendas was to see Prince-will and if he was in school, I knew he was likely to be in LHC which is close to Student's Affair block. I decided to check on him from there. I called him and he confirmed he was in the same hall I met him the previous day then I told him to wait for me that I had something to tell him.

It wasn't up to 150 seconds and we were already in LHC block. So we walked into LHC3 only to see Prince-will seating with the two guys I came to report to him.

How do I handle this?

It is at times like this that life in a movie becomes sweeter than life in reality. In a movie, it has been written in a script but in life, it's just permutation and combination that's why you copy things less from movies. It may not be so in reality. I could easily go there and beat them but it happens only in movies. It was my turn to solve a problem I didn't cause.

One thing was that immediately I entered, our eyes met so there was no way I could run back, they will just pluck my eye at night. I could go there and speak on another thing but who knows if Prince-will has already told them I was coming to

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tell him something, I won't be safer either. But one thing was sure, I must do something. My greatest problem was that I had less than 2 seconds to think all these possibilities as we were already walking to meet the seating team of Prince-will and his enemies he believes to be his friends.

Even James didn't know what I was facing. Of course, he didn't know the guys and I wasn't thoughtful enough to show him their picture before the moment. Before one could notice, we were already standing before the three guys. When I tried to look at the face of the two strange guys, I saw guilt, hatred and command written. I had to play safe to be safe. We shook hands together before Prince-will demanded we sit down before talking. Trying to sit down, my eyes met with that of one of the guys again and he winked me with a rugged face. I couldn't show them that I was completely lazy so I sent back the look with a stronger face.

I decided to ignore them to make sure I play my card well. I started by telling Prince-will I just bought the form. He demanded to see it. I showed him and he confirmed it was authentic. Then I continued

'My guy, e get wetin make me say I want see you'

Prince-will: *Continue, I dey listen.*

Me: *Okay, when I go buy this form, e get one fair guy wey I see, he say the day wey them go swear us in, say make I vote for am as the speaker of the house.*

Prince-will: *Wetin be the guy name?*

Me: *I nor even ask am. He just say he go call me later.*

Prince-will: *So wetin be the problem now?*

Me: *I nor know whether make I support the guy or another better person dey.*

Prince-will: (smiled) *For this life, nobody be better person. We all change when we see things we've not seen before.*

Me: *Na true.*

Prince: *See, for now, forget other people. Just go fill your form make you submit. We go settle down play the game after SUG election. Time dey, enough time.*

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I thanked him and stood up to leave with the excuse that there was a lecturer in our class already. Prince-will who seemed not to joke with studies urged me to get to class as soon as possible. Before we left, I took another look at the guys but they refused to look back at me.

I smiled and bounced out with James. We didn't go far before James asked,

'Why you go there go mumu yourself?'

Me: good question. *Thank God say you nor ask am for there.*

James: *Uya answer me.*

Me: *You see those two other guys wey dey there?*

James: Uhm

Me: *Na them I be wan report give Prince-will.*

James: *Shey you say you nor know them before?*

Me: *So I tell you now say I know them before? Na coincidence we take meet for there.*

James: *Okay, na now I dey understand. Na bad game be that o.*

Me: *Thank God say you don dey use your head now.*

James: *Shey them be friends?*

Me: *I nor know. E nor matter wetin them be, wetin I know be say the guys dey backbite am.*

James: *Nawa o. Guy you go dey careful o.*

Me: *You nor need to tell me.*

James: *I don forget say you be safety officer.*

Me: Idiot

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when we got to class, the lecturer was already in but yet to start lecture. We quickly settled for a seat at the back as there was no better option.

After the lecture, now with James, Henry and Ify, we went to the school Auditorium, our usual camp. I narrated to the house, Henry and Ify in particular what happened under the last 24 hours. They waved it off but still commented it was a one-way thing. That case closed, I brought out my form and started filling. I can't submit the form until two senior lecturers have signed so after filling the form, I moved to Engineering complex alone to ask for signatures. At three trials, I was able to get the signature of our exam officer and that of Mechanical Engineering. Afterwards, I went to submit my form.

Since the start of the semester that our department was pushed to NH3, Mass Communication students had been occupying our Engineering hall, MPH which was a perfect illustration of irony. So since I was already close to MPH, I decided to see Ann first before going far away back to New Hall buildings.

I dialled her number, it rang but she didn't pick the call. I was a bit worried but didn't want to conclude anything.

I went closer to hall and found out that some people were outside while others were inside. It was obvious they were separated for a test.

I looked at the people outside, there was no Ann. I peeped inside, I saw her sitting at the front row. When our eyes met, she went to meet the invigilator and afterwards came to meet me outside.

Before I could apologise to her for not being at home when she came the previous day, she hurriedly told me not to be angry with her because she didn't come that she will explain to me when she's through. I smiled and told her to go inside and make sure she does well. She told me to wait for her that we will go home together then I told her to come meet me in auditorium when she's through.

She nodded and rushed inside then I did a U turn and walked away. When I got to the auditorium, there was no Ify. I met just James and Henry. 'Where is Ify,' I asked.

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Henry: *You dey crase. Na she dey important pass the two of us wey you see for here?*

Me: *E get wetin I want take you do before?*

We were still playing when Ify walked inside with a black nylon. Whatever it was, I knew it was eatable so I rushed her but she dodged me and ran to give it to James. I relaxed for what the content of the nylon to be revealed and just when James opened it to bring out one of the many provisions, Henry said to me, '*See your guy o*'

I was surprised when I looked back and it was Prince-will.

Two questions ran through my mind. First, how did he know I was here and secondly, why did he come? I waited hoping to get answers to my questions as he walked closer to me.

'Good afternoon bro', I greeted him and he replied even though he wasn't smiling.

Me: *How you dey waka for here?*

Prince-will: *I dey that side dey talk to people when you pass. So I say make I come see as you dey do am for here.*

Me(smiling): *Your guy loyal o. We just dey observe for here, nothing else.*

Prince-will: *I believe. Okay na, make I find my way reach house.*

Me: *Okay na. No p.*

James (to me): *Nor let am comot o. If you want tell am that stuff, na the perfect time be this.*

Without replying James, I called out on Prince-will and begged him to come back. He believed I would say something relevant so he made a U-turn without hesitating.

When he got to where we were, I asked him to take a seat. I started by asking him who the two guys were to him since I saw them seating together in the morning. He then told me that they were his course mates. I asked if he share any personal

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relationship with them and he told they are members of same political forum. As a matter of fact, they initiated the idea together.

I liked the way he was answering me directly. He knew I had something to say at the end. Then I asked him, 'How much do you trust them?'

Prince-will: I don't trust them.

Me: Okay, good. *You don't ever think am say those guys fit work against you?*

Prince-will: Not really but I'm expecting it. *Wetin dey your mouth?* Tell me.

Me: Okay.

I explained to him how the two guys discussed deeply to make sure he doesn't succeed, saying that he can't get things done his own way. As cool as Prince-will, the guy smiled adding that he was not surprised. He boasted that the guys were in stages he had passed when he was in primary school. I didn't know what that meant neither did I want to know. He thanked me and told me not to be worried that he would handle everything perfectly. I nodded and we shook hands before he left.

Immediately Prince-will left, Ify started blaming me for telling him. She felt the other guys will find out and will try to make me pay for it but I told her to forget her girlish talk.

About 40 minutes later, Ann called me and asked if I was still in the auditorium. When I told her I was still there, she told me to wait for her there. It didn't take her long to show herself. First thing I noticed was that she didn't come with her friends. I expected it since they all probably just finished writing the test. When I asked her she told me she was the one that dismissed them explaining that she told them she would be going with me. I then asked her how the test was and she gave a positive remark.

The day was strong and sharp. The sun was doing its job so well. 1pm, it was time for another lecture. Together with Ann, we all went into our lecture hall because we couldn't send her away or leave her alone. When we got to the class, the lecturer was yet to enter. A handful of guys in the class started hailing. Once again, they've seen Ann in their class. The Ann they won't hear is not my girlfriend. Not quite long from the time we entered, the lecturer came in. We sat at the back to cover up Ann should the lecturer try to ask her any question.

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The clock kept going and before we knew it, it was already 3pm. The lecturer dismissed us and we shouted TGIF. There is always the feeling that it's a Friday even when one has nothing to do with it. In my own case, Fridays only give me the feeling that English Premier League is just a stone throw away.

While getting ready to leave school, Ify announced to us that she won't be leaving with us as she will be going to meet her Aunty in the school. This meant that Ann will be the only female in a group of four. It's not new so we accepted our fate and started our journey back home.

Fate wasn't kind as when we got to the school gate, there was no bus in sight at the garage. It meant that if at all we would get home using a bus, we would have to hustle for it. It's usually fun when you drag a bus that will contain just 18 with more than 200 people. The only problem was the woman we had with us. She may not be sharp enough to get into the same bus with us. Because of that, we decided to hide the 'street blood' in us and act as gentlemen. We took a long walk through the road flooded with other students in same shoe as us. Fortunately for us, we managed to get a bus almost close to Campus C.

In the bus, Henry announced he will be going home straight to wash his clothes and reduce his Saturday works. It brought some sense into James too and he said he was going to do same.

Me, the foolish man, I decided to stop with Ann at her place.

Everything was going as planned and when we were off the bus, I found myself in Ann's hostel.

Fun enough, her friends came to join. The aproko gang, we spent the whole evening talking and blabbing. When it was time for me to go, it was already 7pm but Ann insisted on seeing me off and alone.

So we strolled through the Uku-Orji-to-first-bank road. The street as usual was busy with every bar and store trying to make their music the loudest. The smell of cigar along the road was enough to kill the smell of perfume on a person's cloth. Guys of *definition definition* were hanging around the road. Though it seemed like

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everyone was minding their own business. But I knew a few of them were waiting for a prey to snatch something from.

Ann seemed to care less about the environment as she locked her hand with mine and we were flinging it through the thin air in a to and fro movement.

She didn't agree to go back until we got to first bank. For no reason, I was just so afraid of letting her walk back alone. I stopped a bike man against her wish. She was still demanding I send the bike guy away when I gave the bike guy N50 and walked away. If she get mind, make she leave the bike wey I don pay for trek dey go house. From afar, I saw her climb the bike and I was relieved and gave out a smile.

Chapter 6

W

hen I got home, I went straight to my kitchen. I only put my soup

on fire when that Danny Krane's Amin started singing on my phone. I checked and it was James. I picked the call and in a rough tone, he said

'Guy come come come problem dey, nor ask question, just come my place now now now'

Then he ended the call. I called him back and he wasn't picking the call. I was worried that I put on my shirt immediately, locked my door and went all the way to James' house.

Okay, just close to James' house, another call came in. This time around from Ann.

'Hello Ann'

In a dying tone she replied, *'Kelvin them don carry me o'*

aghh aghnn which kind talk be all these na. Before I could ask her questions, the call ended. I called her back but she wasn't picking the call.

For one second, I became mad. I stood still not knowing who to attend to. My mind was telling me to attend to Ann first because whatever thing that must have happened, happened because of me. I turned back but then realised that I don't even know where to go to.

I had no other option than to meet James first and know what his problem is and if he has a minor problem, then he can give a helping hand or head. In 10 seconds, I was at James' door knocking. Without waiting for him to answer, I zoomed inside. I met him lying down on the floor with a textbook and a reading lamp close to his head.

'*Wetin dey do you?*' I queried.

James: *Seat down na abi you nor go seat down?*

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Me: *See, I dey rush. Just talk before I run leave you for here.*

James: *Where you dey go?*

Me: *See, Ann call me just now say them hold am.*

James: *Who hold am?*

Me: *How you want make I know na, I nor know o.*

James: *Nawa o. So where you come dey go?*

Me: *I nor even know.*

In the middle of our conversation, the phone rang and it was the Ann. I hurriedly picked it and got angry when I heard it was a joke. She wasn't even the one that called. It was her friend Blessing that called with her line saying she knew I would be worried that was she called to clear my head. I wasn't going to take that so I asked her to give the phone to Ann. This mumu Ann collected the phone and started laughing.

Me: (angrily) *So why you dey laugh now? Is it funny?*

Ann: *No, sorry. Nor be my fault. I never complete my sentence when you conclude.*

Me: *Na me cut the call?*

Ann: *Na network. Sorry. Na my friends carry me say we go from their house go all-night.*

Me: *Rubbish. Make thunder fire una and the all-night.*

I angrily ended the call and threw my phone to James' bed. She called back, I didn't pick. She called again, then I turned the phone off.

Somehow in my mind, there was a big relief. Then I remember James was calling for help too. Then I asked him

'You too, wetin be your problem?'

He sat up from the floor he was sitting already and went to stand close to the exit door. Just then I knew he wanted to say rubbish. He knew I will break his head if

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he was closer. I didn't need him to say anything again, I just felt weak and lay on his bed.

Then the idiot said

'Nor vex o. As I wan take do my own before, e nor for vex you o but because of Ann now, I know say you don dey vex already. I just call you make we solve maths before o'

I looked at the floor and saw two different maths textbook with a calculator. I collected the textbook and made an attempt to throw it at him and he ran outside; then I went to the door and locked it up.

I can't believe I almost went mad because of pranks. It's not like God will not punish them anyway. It was then I remembered I had not eaten the food I cooked. At the other side, James was pleading for me to open the door for him.

I wasn't going to do that. And if I wasn't going to open it, I had to look for what I will eat inside the house. I went to his kitchen and found 3 packets of 'indomitable pack' Indomie. One of his pots had stew. I smiled and began cooking.

After eating, I sat on the floor, resting my back on the wall. I switched on my phone and an SMS jumped in from Ann. I hissed, not willing to read it. Then I checked my time and it was past 10pm.

I decided the help the begging idiot outside by opening the door for him.

I opened the door and went to sleep.

By 5am the next morning, James woke me up. He still wanted us to solve the maths together. I didn't know his reason for being so serious this time around so together, we solved as many questions as we could until 7 o'clock.

When we opened the door, a very big sun was smiling from the heavens. It was those early morning sun that makes somebody think it's 11am already when the time is just 7am. It was a bright, smart and sound Saturday morning. We sat down to do a recap of all that happened the previous night. James complained it was his dinner that I ate and when he went to buy another one the stores were closed and he slept on empty belly. I was happy he got punished at the end. He then

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apologised saying he knew I won't come if he had told me we had something to study.

I just wanted to forget about the whole rubbish and decided not to argue anything with him.

What about Ann? I decided to read the text she sent the previous night. She was still apologizing, pleading with me to pick her calls.

Minutes before 9 o'clock, we were already in school for maths lecture. As usual, the class was fun with funny words being thrown by those Mech Engine guys who sit at the back.

By 11am, we were through with the class. Ify was nowhere near the hall which means that she missed the class. Henry walked up to me and James and we sat down while others walked to and fro the hall. In 15 minutes, the hall was empty having only the three of us in it. There was no plan. We didn't just feel like going home maybe because they did the washing the previous day.

We started by making football predictions for the weekend; trying so well to wish one's own team well and wish the rest evil. That's football. *Bad belle* game.

We were doing our loud argument when we heard footsteps from the back. Being a 'safety officer', I was the first to take a look in case it warrants race.

It was a group of three girls; Ann and her friends. In my mind, how did they know we were here?

We stopped talking as we watched them come closer. It wasn't our house so they sat down without being permitted when they got to where we were.

After exchange of pleasantries, there was a minute silence as nobody was ready to say a word. I knew they were feeling sorry about what they connived to do the previous night so I broke the silence.

'Aunty them don release you?'

She smiled and managed to say that she was sorry. I told her it was okay and asked her how she knew we were there. Then she said she saw us coming to school and

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decided it was the best place to meet us believing we would go to viewing centre from school and she wasn't wrong.

The six of us stayed in the big hall gisting and laughing over different things. By 12:40pm, we got set to leave school because the first match was by 1:30pm. It was a good day for big teams as they all won which I don't like.

By 7:30pm, I got home after watching the 5:30pm match. I don't know if it was planned but almost everybody in my compound has travelled.

The next day brought a Sunday. There was nothing much to do other than to go to church. I wasted my Saturday so when I came back from church, I rested and in the afternoon, I did all the washing and sanitation.

I woke up around 6pm to find out I slept off while playing game after I finished working. I felt weak so I decided to go and take my bath.

At 7pm, I was fresh and strong but still had nothing to do. I tried social media thing but it was as if Facebook users were on strike. The only thing left for me was to go and watch late night Barcelona match but nature didn't approve it as it started raining heavily. When I waited for the rain to stop and it didn't, I had to settle for something in my room. Everything looked boring. I managed to pick my note to go through some calculations but in 30 minutes, I was through. I couldn't sleep because I slept all through the early evening. Worst of all, 3G network disappeared.

You know, in life, there is always that last minute solution. It was then I remembered that James used my phone to collect a movie from somebody when his phone went off in school. He was yet to take it from my phone so I was sure I didn't delete it. I went through my gallery and good enough, it was there.

Two hours later, I finished watching the interesting 'Colombiana'. It was so interesting that I thanked God for sending the rain. I would have just wasted N100 in the name of watching one Barca match.

After watching the movie, I just wanted to play some matches before sleeping. The game was loading when a call interrupted it. I hissed. I hate calls when playing games most especially when the call is from an unknown number.

I picked the call and in a low tone, I greeted

BECAUSE OF ANN

'Good evening'

caller: Am I speaking to Kelvin?

Me: Yeah, this is Kelvin.

Caller: Good. Now listen very well.

Me: Go on, I can hear you.

Caller: I heard you're the elected representative of your department. Is that true?

Me: Yeah. Who are you?

Caller: It doesn't matter. What matters is that I want you to step down.

Me: What do you mean?

Caller: You have just tomorrow to do that. Good night.

Then the guy ended the call. I called back but the line was switched off. Then I started wondering;

who could this guy be?

I tried to make guesses. Could it be those Prince-will's friends? could it be Marcus? can Shedrack have a hand in this? I don't trust anybody. Or is it that somebody is playing pranks again. I've got myself so engaged with the wrong set of people that I don't know who to suspect of evil again.

I checked my time and it was past 10pm. The rain had reduced to approximate minimum. Then I said to myself: there is no need to worry this night, at least he gave me till the next day so he can't come to attack me this night.

Even when I was trying to find confidence, it was still difficult for me to find sleep.

You see? The most important thing in this life is 'PEACE'. If you don't have it, you are fucked for life.

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Chapter 7

BECAUSE OF ANN

The next morning, I woke up without alarm around 5am meaning that it was like a long night to me. All I wanted was to get to school to learn some things.

By 7am, I was already set for school. I hung my bag and went to meet James. He was surprised to see that I prepared for school so early. Like he knew all about me, he asked,

'Something dey pursue you abi na you dey pursue something?'

I didn't even know the right sentence out of the two: they both seemed correct.

I explained my parlous ordeal to him. He smiled instead and told me it's nothing to worry about. We were going to watch things happen.

It was going to be a serious week. SUG election has been scheduled to hold on Friday and we were supposed to be screened on Tuesday. Everything was supposed to be smooth if that call didn't come in. I decided to be strong and positive as we headed to school.

The first period by 9am was a practical. When we got to the practical lab, the practical lecturer announced to us that he was through with us and that we should go ahead to submit our report books.

We were all happy. Nobody wanted to be attending those practical classes again. Everyone separated to their own hood. I had to say and hear some words and the only person I needed for that was my course rep. I called him and told him where to meet me.

After a few minutes, he came with one of those guys who is always pestering him. I needed to talk to him alone that was why I asked him to come. I made a sign to him about the guy and being a perspicacious person, he got my signal and asked the guy to excuse us. The environment just had me, James, Henry and Kelvin, my

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course rep. After telling him what and how it happened, he asked me to give him the number and I did. He dialled it on his phone hoping it will show a name but the number was strange to him too and was still switched off.

He then told me to be careful and watch my movement see how things would unfold. He suggested I call the guy who said I should vote for him as a speaker of the house but I turned it down being that it doesn't concern him and it was my own problem.

He without doubt accepted my opinion and left promising to communicate with me once the need arises. We shook hands and he left.

From where we were, we could sight group of people running around with different banners like somebody died all in the name of campaign. School was already less serious in terms of academics but hot the other way round.

For me and my friends, we cared less because we had our own mountain to climb which even seemed more deadly.

At a time, Henry told me to take things serious that it may really be something serious. I saw reasons with him and immediately, I dialled Prince-will's number. He answered at the first ring then without too much talk, I asked him where I could see him. He told me to come and meet him at the uncompleted building opposite Rector's office. It seemed a dangerous place but I had no much options. Together with my friends, I got there before 10 minutes. He was easy to locate as he was the only one standing there with a girl.

We greeted and then the girl waved him and walked away. There's something I like about Prince-will; he knows when someone is serious. Without delay, he asked me what my problem was.

I told him everything word by word and at the end of my story, all he could do was let out a cheap smile. I didn't know what to make of the smile then he asked me,

'Are you afraid?'

BECAUSE OF ANN

I didn't know what to answer him so I kept mute. He then tapped my shoulder and told me not to be afraid. He asked if I was suspecting anybody but after a short thinking, I told him no.

He continued by saying it's a normal thing that happens as election is closing by but that I should not be afraid because only the strong survives. He advised that I shouldn't hide anywhere but should freely go to as many places as possible that the person knows me and must have been watching and that if I hide, I'm only showing the person that I'm afraid.

I got a point from what he said and to conclude things, he told me to call him first thing tomorrow morning. I thanked him in our local language and we left.

Near afternoon, we managed to learn one thing that nobody was even interested in apart from those *over sabi* students. Immediately after the lecture, we went home. At my room, we (me, James and Henry) formed a straight circle (lol) and started making permutations and combinations of any possible possibility.

At the end, we arrived at the conclusion, that I will not sleep in my house.

Later around 5pm, Henry left for his far home while I stayed back with James until it was 7pm. I had to confuse everybody around into believing that I was at home only to leave when no one noticed.

Early in the night, around 10pm, me and James were making predictions of possible winners of the forth coming SUG elections. We hadn't done so much when my phone started ringing. I checked the phone and it was that same strange number. My heart skipped a beat. James urged me to answer the call with all the powers in my tongue and I did.

Me: yes?

Caller: *Kelvin or what are you called? You dey try my patience abi? You wan play smartness for me shey?*

Me: *Guy relax, who you be self? Wetin be your problem? Show yourself if you nor dey fear.*

Caller: *You don gather mind abi? No wahala na. Actions speaks louder than voice, you go know me very soon.*

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Me: *Guy go sleep, it's late already.*

Then I ended the call and set my mouth open.

For 30 seconds, neither me nor James could say something. It was seriously nearing something bigger than us if we were to be honest to ourselves. Apart from hiring people to escort us, we don't have a single *confra* power of our own because we never looked like one.

It looked like we were taking more than we can chew. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the events were happening to people who believe that the greatest limitation of man is fear and negativity. To us, there was no going back and we were ready to play our cards well.

James tried to call the number with his phone if we can at least get a clue about the dark horse but the number was again switched off. It was becoming a puzzle harder than the solution to the problems of Nigeria.

But again, we can't die without seeing death. So we pushed on in belief.

The next morning, when we woke up, **we remembered to pray to God for his mercy.** In times like this, people get killed at night but we were still alive.

After the prayer, I picked up my phone and called Prince-will as he requested of me. I told him the situation of things and the recent development. His response was that I should use my head and if I must be in school, I should come earlier or later than the supposed time. And again, I must use bike not bus. Without much thinking, I understood why he was saying all that.

I thanked him and put the call to an end. We prepared and left for school immediately.

Just at the entrance path to school, someone came close to me from behind and covered my eyes for me to guess who he or she was. All those olden days' play. It was easy for to identify the owner of the soft palm; not because of how soft the palm was but because of the smell of the cream on the palm.

'Ann' I said and she removed her hands immediately in disappointed but the look on her face showed she was happy that I've known so much about her. I dragged her closer to myself and we held hands as we walked through the path.

BECAUSE OF ANN

Short discussion followed after greetings and she said she came early because she wanted to secure a good position at the bursary queue. I chuckled because I know how difficult it will be for her to leave the place in success even though she's the first person.

When we got to the points that separated our destinations, we parted ways.

James was behind me. Thank God he looked way more matured than I was. *If nobody fear me, others go fear am at least.* We avoided going to class. Instead, we moved straight to auditorium to see things happening in the school live. Seconds grew into minutes and minutes into hours. School got filled with people who were all busy with campaigns and other political activities. There were less classes talking about lecture. In my own department, we were sure nothing was going to happen as it was a day we had GNS courses. Those people don't joke with you. Once school says start lecture, they start; the moment school says stop, they stop. And because it was election week, it was normal that lectures will be paused to allow students do their thing well. At about 9:30am, Henry came to join us. We didn't allow him seat before we told him what happened the previous night. He made mockery of us and called us names before getting serious. We tried thinking but still arrived at the conclusion that we have to watch things happen.

We were still in our gists when Prince-will called me. He asked if I was in school and I told him yes. He asked if I have told what was happening to the guy that said I should vote for him as the speaker of the house. I told him no. And he suggested that I tell him.

Immediately he ended the call, I called the guy. I told him the situation of things but all he could say was that I should relax that it was all mere threats. I believed him so I thanked him and ended the call. Not long after that, Ify called me. She asked where I was and I told her I was in auditorium with my friends. She then said I should wait that she was coming.

Minutes later, we saw her bouncing towards our direction. She came in with some silly smiles. She only give such smile when she want to be stupid and things didn't change. She went to James and hugged him; went to Henry and hugged him; then came to me and stretched her hand for me to shake her.

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Some mumu boys who saw what happened started laughing. I was shameful sha so I had to recover my pride. I dragged her through her waiting hand and she fell into me and started laughing. After laughing, she sat up and sat on my lap. She then said she had a reason for doing what she did. So I asked her

'Which kind mumu reason be that?'

And she replied

'When I dey enter school, some mumu children stop me come dey ask me if I know you and I come say yes. They come ask me if I be your girlfriend.'

Me: *So wetin you tell them?*

Ify: *Wetin I for tell them before? I tell them say I nor be your girlfriend o.*

Me: *You be mumu o. You know whether them wan give you money come give me?*

Ify: *Yua go school gate, you go see them make them give you the money.*

We all joked over the issue but within me, James and Henry we knew what was hiding in the dark. We tricked Ify and sent her away. She don't need to be close to us any longer to avoid putting her in danger. Immediately, we changed location. I wanted to call Prince-will to tell him about the recent development but Henry advised against it.

Then I asked them. Where do you people want us to go now?

James; Me I don't even know o.

Henry: *Make we go Library.*

Me: I think that's a perfect place.

So we went to the library and took ourselves to the back seat. Not like we really wanted to read so we went and collected a newspaper and started looking at pictures like some primary 2 children.

It wasn't long, we saw Ann at the entrance door looking left and right like she lost somebody in the library. I stood up and she saw me and immediately walked to

BECAUSE OF ANN

meet us. Without being asked, she explained that she saw us coming in and had to come and meet us since she had nothing more to do and that she will be going home with us. Then I said to her,

'No problem'.

Saying no problem was another mistake I made without knowing it was one until now.

After about an hour in the library, we felt we were done and had to start going home.

On our way, we made jokes and laughed till we even forgot we had problems of any kind. We were all smiles. This is the point where Gordon says

“No man goes to war and entangles himself with the affairs of the world”. We so much got entangled that we noticed nothing happening around us.

Not quite long after, we were all at home, my place. Laziness won't let anyone cook so we bought bread and two bottles of coke, Hausa people lunch. After eating, we had more gist and arguments. Before we knew it, it was already 6pm. Henry and James left at the same time. It was just me and Ann being serious. We started discussing about reasonable things, sharing our views about situations, circumstances and other odd events. By the time we got satisfied with ourselves to remember that she would be going home, it was past 8pm.

Something in me told me to tell her to stay back but on a second thought, she may not be anything near safe sleeping in my house. I picked up my phone and made to see her off.

The street was busy like there was a party nearby. Unlike Lagos where everyone rushes, a fair number of people in sight were just strolling. We cared less so we focused on ourselves.

I stopped a bike and instead of her to enter, she gave me a silly hug that even made the okada man throw away his face. *That thing dey vex person sha*. When she finally entered the bike, I told the bike man her destination and the guy pronounced N70. Without argument, I gave him N100 and he gave me N30 then I pushed the money into Ann's bag. She brought out N50 and made to give it to me but the bike man started going already so she threw the money to the ground. I started smiling

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like a fool when I tried thinking what makes her do silly things like this. After watching the money being waved zig zag by the wind from passing vehicles, I slowly went and picked the money.

On my way back home, I remembered all my challenges, the thought of where to sleep arose again in me, without much contemplation, I chose to go back to James' place.

Immediately I entered my room, I collected everything I needed and bounced off to James' house. Getting to his house, I met him opening his door.

Me: *Where you go before?*

James: *I go buy card. You find me come before?*

Me: No.

James: *I even don dey think say you nor go come again.*

Me: No. *Na now Ann dey comot.*

James: Since?

Me: *Wetin be since?*

James: *You for let am go early na. Na you know o.*

Me: *E never reach like that. Open door make I drop these things.*

James: *I hear.*

He opened the door and we entered like people entering Noah's ark. Before I could drop the things I was holding, he asked if Ann has gotten home.

Me: *E never too tey wey she comot. I know say she go call me when she reach house.*

James: I hear. *You don eat?*

Me: No.

BECAUSE OF ANN

James: *Na im you come here? Be like you want carry empty belle sleep o.*

Me: *You get food na.*

James: *Zero. Even if e dey, I nor go give you.*

Me: *Wetin I do you na.*

James: *Nothing. I just wan wicked today.*

Me: *Thunder fire you and your food.*

I entered the kitchen and all I met was a dirty pot containing empty sachets of indomie and some other rubbish. I didn't talk to him. I just walked outside and went to buy my own.

In the next 20 minutes, the food was ready. James won't even let somebody eat the food as he carried his fork while I managed my spoon. After eating, he then asked if I've heard from Ann. My heart skipped a beat for a reason I didn't even know. The thing is that she was supposed to have let me know she got home as she use to but it was past 40 minutes and there was no single sign from her.

It was enough reason for me to get worried. I dialled her number immediately but it was switched off. I could have relaxed but not when I know that she left my house 40 minutes ago with a fair percentage of battery.

I tried dialling her friend Blessing only to find out her number was stored in my Etisalat line that I kept at home. I decided to be positive with things by forcing myself to believe that she was fine and was probably charging her phone.

As the night kept journeying, I kept trying Ann's number at intervals. The only consolation and hope I had was the presence of James. I won't start crying in his presence over something that looked closely like nothing.

The situation remained same until even 11pm. I didn't know when I slept off. I only woke up around 4am and found out I actually slept. Five seconds after I woke up, I remembered Ann. Immediately, I searched for my phone, picked it up and rang her number. It was same old story as the line was still switched off. My head became heavy. Once again, I remembered that the best gift from God after life is

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peace. A man who doesn't have peace is fucked for life. Why would I be waking by 4am without alarm if things were normal?

I tried forcing myself back to sleep but it wasn't working. When I saw that sleep wasn't going to come, I picked my phone to keep myself company as I didn't want to disturb James.

After some time, I felt a tap on my lap. I opened my eyes and it was James. I looked at myself and I was seating down. It then occurred to me that I slept off while waiting. James seeing things were not alright didn't bother to ask me what my problem was because he knows. He just told me we need to hurry up and get to her house in time before she goes to school as we need to see her face to face instead of working on referral like it's MMM. I got his point so I stood up and rushed everything.

For the first time since the semester resumed, I left home for school without taking my breakfast when there was food at home. Before 8am, we were already at Ann's small hostel just opposite Don Jazzy. We met Blessing standing at her door pressing her phone.

When she saw us, she rushed words like she's been wanting to see us. I was beginning to get afraid.

‘Where is Ann?’ I asked.

Blessing: *I dey even find her. I never see her since she comot go school yesterday and her number nor dey go.* (This made me dumb)

James: Abi she get another friend wey she fit dey her place?

Blessing: No. *I been wan even call Kelvin before. Na only him place I know say she fit sleep.*

James: *Nawa o.*

It was becoming a reality to me, a bad one for that matter. How do I explain to God that I have a hand in her disappearance? Okay, what about I tell Blessing it's me and at the end, it's not me, how will I free myself?

BECAUSE OF ANN

Though in my mind, be it what it may, I can't deny her in any condition. If it be bad, whether I have a hand in it or not, I will use my last strength to bring her back to safety. It's a duty I owe her being that the last place she visited was mine.

It was no time to blab so I tapped James on his shoulder signalling him that we had to leave. Immediate action was needed and standing there was never a part of it. I told Blessing not to worry that I will communicate with her once I see Ann which she nodded in affirmation.

She stood in pure show of concern as she watched us walk away. Immediately we got to our own path far away from anybody who had a concern about Ann, I looked at James in a way that asks

'You dey think wetin I dey think?'

‘What's the next think?’ he asked me.

Me: I need to act fast and reasonably. Nothing must touch Ann, not even a scratch of a finger nail.

James: So how do you intend to find her now?

Me: If she is really held hostage because of me, it will be because of the office, so I will let it go and save her from any kind of harm.

James: I hope it happens without stress. But the thing is that we don't even know her whereabouts.

Me: Yeah. It's sure a problem *but wetin I know be say if na them hold her, them nor go kill am, na just to use her against me.*

James: *Na true sha. But na God go help us.*

Me: Yes na. God wey fit deliver Daniel, Shedrack, Meshack and Abednego.

James: *Mumu, those people wey you mention, who go DSPG among them abi who go run for SUG post?*

Me: *Abeg leave me, omni-knowest.*

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We stopped a bike and travelled to school. Our footsteps were exactly that of toads running in the afternoon but what I was not sure of was if we were after something or something was after us. Life is like that at times. You just know you have a problem but when you're asked, you just find out that you don't even know what your problem is.

When we got to school, nothing even looked like we were searching for a whole human being. Everywhere looked bright and everyone looked happy. That's what life is, it just keeps going without thinking about you and your problems or your success. Instead you're the one who struggles to meet up with the running life.

We looked for a corner and sat down. I felt I was delaying but when I wanted to do something, I didn't even know what to start with. I kept trying Ann's number but it was same old story. I went ahead to try the strange number that my enemies have been using to call me but that one didn't even bother to say switched off; it will just beep three times and hang up.

I was in the middle of the deepest sea of 'no idea'. Where to start from was my major problem. I had to call Henry to ask him to come to school as quick as possible then he told me he was on his way already.

It wasn't up to 10 minutes, he showed up after he had called to know our location. Without any form of joke, I sat him down and told him the situation of things. Somebody's daughter was most likely in hostage because of one silly post. He got as worried as we had been since the previous night.

He asked if I have called Prince-will and I said no.

Henry: *But anything fit happen o. All those Prince-will friends, I nor trust them o.*

Me: Not like I'm telling you I trust anybody. Even your very self is a suspect in this case.

Henry: *Thunder you dey hear o.*

James: *Nor be thunder matter, na true the guy dey talk.*

We were in the middle of our sad discussion when my phone started ringing. I looked at the caller and the word 'Ann' jumped out from my mouth. I hurried picked the call and put it on loud speaker.

BECAUSE OF ANN

Me: Ann!

Instead of her to answer, a male voice responded instead.

'O boy how you dey see am now?'

Me: Who are you?

Guy: *You suppose don know my voice by now.*

Me: Where's the owner of the phone?

Guy: *Which owner? Na this fine girl? We dey with am for here. I know say na your thing. Give us our thing make you take your own.*

Me: Now listen. If anything happens to that girl, either of the both of us will die untimely.

Guy: *I dey wait.*

Before I knew it, Henry dragged the phone from me as I watched expecting without prediction.

Henry: *See, just tell us wetin you want.*

Guy: *Simple thing na.* Leave the Honourable post and we all behave like this never happened.

Henry: Okay, he will do that. Can we talk to the girl now?

Guy: No

Henry: Why?

Guy: *Go do wetin I tell you.* Bye bye.

Then he ended the call. We tried calling back but it was switched off.

Me: *Wetin dey worry the guy na? Why he nor go let the girl talk?*

Henry: *so you know say the girl dey important and you dey follow the guy drag? Na you know na, when you go kill person daughter, your eye go clear.*

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James: *Guy take am easy, nobody go die.*

Me: I can't be in peace knowing Ann is going through hell because of me. I will quit.

Henry: *Make we go find Kelvin (our course rep). Na him go tell us how we go take do am.*

James: *Hmmm, Uya call am make we know where he dey.*

Then I dialled the guy's number but he didn't pick calls. The whole thing was becoming annoying and frustrating.

At a point, it occurred to me that if I wanted to quit, I didn't have to look for anybody. It's just about going to the same place I submitted my form and tell them *'I nor dey do again'*. I explained my view to them and they confirmed it was the truth. The next thing was to act. Together, we all went to Student's Affairs block. No one was smiling. When we got there, we matched inside without greeting anybody we were supposed to. One security man was even calling for our attention but we paid deaf ears to him and continued our peace journey for survival.

So we got to the office, unfortunately, the door was locked. This got me mad. WTF! I just needed somebody to come and talk to us so I started knocking at the door nonstop. The next minute, a woman came out from the next office to ask us what our problem was. Then I told her we wanted to see the lady who owns the office. She just closed her eyes like she was trying to recall something and ended up telling us she came to work before but just left for her village for a reason she best known to her as she told nobody.

Me: Ahhh! Did she say when she will return?

Lady: Yeah. She did say today. But maybe she won't come back to work until tomorrow.

Me: Alright ma. Thank you ma.

Lady: You're welcome. But hope it's not form you want to buy because at this time, it's only legislative form that's selling. Executive election is on Friday and you can't buy the form now.

BECAUSE OF ANN

Me: Yes. I know. I want to withdraw my interest actually.

Lady: I don't understand.

Me: I already bought the legislative form but I want to step down.

Lady: (laughing) *Bad boys don threaten you abi?*

Me: (ashamed and trying to cover up) No o. Not at all. I just don't want distraction in my academics.

Lady: what were you thinking when you bought the form first. Because now, your money can't be refunded.

Me: It was the devil's work o. They don't want me to graduate with distinction.

Lady: (laughing) What department are you?

Me: Electrical Engineering.

Lady: I see. Just go and come back tomorrow. I trust she will be around.

Me: okay. Thank you ma.

She entered her office back while we stood for another 5 seconds before making move. There was no other thing to do than to wait for tomorrow to come. I wasn't too comfortable with waiting till tomorrow because Ann will also have to wait till then. I felt weak and guilty as we climbed down the exit stair case of the Student Affair's building.

We sat silently at the front of the building without knowing what to do. One word led to the other and James advised it will be good I let Prince-will know about the condition of things.

I saw the point he was driving at so I brought out my phone and dialled Prince-will. He told me he was in a vehicle going to Asaba and won't be able to discuss anything as serious as that and will call me once he gets back home. I told him okay and aborted the call.

Staying in school was not helping the situation in anyway. We then went to class to see if there was any recent development but it looked more like there was no

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school. We were still in the class greeting the few guys we met when my phone started ringing. This time around, it was Ify. I've even forgotten she exist.

Me: *Bae afa.*

Ify: *I dey fine jhor. Good morning.*

Me: Thank you.

Ify: *Where una dey?*

Me: Class. What of you?

Ify: *I dey house. Make I come school?*

Me: *No no no. Them nor dey do anything. Just stay house abeg.*

Ify: Anything the problem?

Me: Not really. *I nor want make you waste your transport money. Use am send card for me instead.*

Ify: *Your head nor well.*

Me: *Na you know that one.*

Ify: *Alright na, we go talk later.*

Me: Yes ma.

After she ended the call, I found out I needed to ask her some questions, so I called her back.

Ify: Yes?

Me: *Shey you say e get people wey stop you for school gate dey ask you whether you be my girlfriend yesterday?*

Ify: *Yes na. Some mumu boys.*

Me: *Abeg, you recognise any of them?*

BECAUSE OF ANN

Ify: *No o. I never even see them before.*

Me: okay.

Ify: Wetin happen?

Me: Nothing. Bye bye.

I ended the call and waved my head to James and Henry in a way that meant let's go.

'Wetin she talk?' they asked. '*She say she nor know them,*' I replied them.

The next 30 minutes saw us home, my house. I spent time, trying both Ann and the guy's number but none was connecting. At a time, I gave up when I learnt that they switch the lines on only when they want to use them. Close to 11am, I remembered that I was yet to eat when the thing started affecting me. Person miss, person nor miss, nor be starvation go bring am bring am back. I brought out N200, James did same while Henry added N100 with the excuse that he would be the one to cook the food. Nobody argued with him. Only him went out and came back later with spaghetti and some mumu mumu things.

At that point, Ann's friend; Blessing, called me to ask if I have seen her but I disappointed her by telling her no. She was almost crying when she told me 'bye bye' and this got me crazy.

Thirty minutes later, the only good thing in the room was the voice of Celine Dion coming from my phone and the smell coming from the kitchen. In a short time, Henry came out from the kitchen looking like an idiot, I only asked him if he has finished cooking and that was how I entered trouble. He threatened me that if I ask him any further question, I won't eat the food. I just respected myself and kept quiet. It was when James asked him what his problem was that he said pepper entered his eyes. Because of hunger, I couldn't laugh so I just smiled.

Seconds grew into minutes, minutes into hours and before we knew it, it was already 6pm. It was time for Henry to leave. As he stood up to go, he told us to wait for him to come first in the morning so that we can go to school together and we nodded in affirmation.

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After he left, we moved to James' house. At James' house, I still tried the two numbers but none was going through. I saved the strange number in my contacts and decided to find the number on whatsapp. I refreshed my whatsapp contact and positive enough, the number was added. But unfortunately, the last seen was '3 months ago' and the profile picture was a picture of skull and sword with red cloth. I was disappointed.

Just then, I remembered there was one place that could help and that was Facebook. I opened my Facebook, ignored messages, notifications and went straight to 'find friends', then 'import contact'. It loaded and fortunately, I saw a name I was sure I've never seen before when the number was not in my phone. All these while, James was watching.

I opened the person's profile and saw only three pictures that had human face. Then I searched more and found out that I had one mutual friend with him. I clicked the mutual friend and my course-mate's name displayed.

'Joel Jai Martins'

James: This is getting interesting.

Me: Yeah. Really interesting.

I let out a cheap smile when I realised I just made myself a police officer as I was ready to start investigations.

James: You get Joel number?

Me: Yeah.

James: *Uya call am na.*

Me: No *na*. It's better I surprise him tomorrow with questions and see the look on his face when he is answering them.

James: It's true *sha*. *You don dey get sense because of this matter o.*

Me: *Thunder fire you.*

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Fast forward to the next morning, Thursday morning, I woke up around 4am. I was disappointed it was still 4am. All I wanted was to be in school as soon as possible. But I had no option than to keep waiting for the proper time.

By 7am, we were already prepared for school, waiting for Henry. At 7:35am, Henry arrived. Like we were *aproko* gang, immediately he came inside, I updated him with the new development. He also believed it was a stepping stone.

Before 8am, we were already on our way to school. We got to school fresh, sharp and filled with inspiration and motivation. We were the definition of a ball of fire. One way, we walked to our lecture hall and sat at the back. We were the first people to enter the class so we waited patiently knowing others will surely come.

Good enough, the first person that came in was Kelvin, our course rep.

He hailed how punctual we were to school but we were not in need of it. When he saw we were serious, he remembered to ask how we've being going with the dark horse. I just trust him for no reason so I told him everything that happened since the last time we met to the very last night. He was shocked when he heard the part that Ann was missing because he already knew Ann just like every other member of the class. Then he asked me the JAMB question that if I was suspecting Joel to be the secret guy.

I just smiled and told him I don't think he is the person but I believe he knows more or less about the person.

As I talked, there was a silent and serious prayer in my mind that Joel should come to school. God answered my prayer around 10am when Henry saw the guy strolling towards class from afar with ear piece plugged into his ears. When Henry announced him to us, the two minutes it took him to get to class just looked to me like 2 days. I stood up and walked up to meet him while Henry and James followed me. I gave him a soft pleasantry and took him to one corner. The way he saw everything happening in a second made him ask

'Ossai, wetin dey happen?'

I didn't want to kill his interest so I smiled and brought up academic issues. The guy is damn serious with book. After he got into the discussion then I brought out

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my phone and started pressing while James kept him busy. When I got the guy's account and opened it, I forced myself back into the chat.

'Wait, Joel come see first'

Joel: *Wetin be that?*

I brought him closer and gave my phone to him.

Me: *You know this person?* (in my mind, God make he nor say no o)

Joel: *Yeah, I know am. Wetin happen?*

Me: *He just send me friend request and I been nor want accept am until I see say you be our mutual friend.*

Joel: *Okay, na one guy like that for my hostel.*

Me: *Una get people for that una hostel o.*

Joel: *Yes na. Na tough guy be that o.*

James: *That one come school too o. E nor go pass all these Mech Engine boys o.*

Joel: *No o. Who dash am Mech Engine? Na SLT student, HND1.*

(The school currently doesn't have SLT; HND, this is done like this to avoid linking the character to any Honourable or SUG member of my time)

Me: *SLT? Na good course be that o. I go like see the guy because one girl for my compound wey dey SLT NDI say she dey find senior SLT students to associate with.*

Joel: *No wahala. The guy kuku like girls.*

Me: *You fit give me him number?*

Joel: *No o. I need to tell am first.*

Me: *Okay. No wahala.*

Henry: *Wetin be him name?*

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Joel: *I nor know o. Na Bakayoko we take know am.*

Me: *Na Chelsea fan be that o.*

Joel: *Big one.*

We all laughed as the guy left us for class. I was first happy I got what I wanted and again pained that we used the head of an innocent mate. When James noticed the poor look on my face, he charged me.

'Guy wetin dey worry you na? You nor thief him (Joel) money or anything. We only did what we did to save a life. We should be thinking of how to do things now to save Ann and save the guy's name too'

Me: Yeah. Thanks.

Henry: *So we nor dey go that woman office go tell am say you dey quit again.*

James: *We go go but nor be now. Make we try something first.*

Henry: *But who be that Bakayoko self and how he take know you?*

Me: Ask me again.

James: Don't worry. At the end of everything, the answer to all puzzles will be revealed.

Me: Sure.

Now we've had a foundation to build on. The next question was what do we do and how do we do it. Before we could answer ourselves, my phone rang and it was the Bakayoko. Immediately I picked the call, he chuckled and said

'Small boy you dey try me o, you want follow me run aluta race abi?'

Me: *No. I try do the thing yesterday but the woman nor dey office. Them say she travel.*

Guy: *Okay, I don call am. She dey come back today because tomorrow na election. So make sure say you nor fuck up.*

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Me: *When she go dey office?*

Guy: *Go be 12 noon.*

Me: *I beg, I fit talk with the girl?*

Guy: Wait

She gave the phone to Ann as the next thing that came was her voice. She really sounded not in peace but assured me she will be fine but tears were near her voice. Before she could say more the guy grabbed the phone from her, said to me

‘After tomorrow, you may not see this girl again, bye,’ and ended the call.

I perceived war was nearing. It's at this point the Korean man will say 'Shine or go crazy'.

Me: Guys, I need to inform Prince-will now.

James: If you think so.

Before I could talk more, my phone started ringing again. When I looked, it was a strange number. I picked it and put it on loudspeaker.

Me: Hello.

Caller: (female voice) Kelvin, listen very carefully. Don't ask questions because you don't have much time. I know where your girlfriend Ann is and I can help you save her if you want. She was kidnapped by a guy called 'Obaro' because he wants you to step down. He wants you to step down because he knows you won't vote for him as the speaker of the house; so his plan is to place another person he trusted in the position and get his position secured.

Me: I see. So who are you and why are you telling me this?

Caller: my name is Ifeyinwa Ekwuyasi, OTM course rep. I'm telling you this because I know you and I want to help you and help myself. Just wait I will call you back later.

After she said that, she ended the call.

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Me: So after all, this is a fight for speakers and not mere honourables? I'm only being a victim, I see.

Henry: But did you hear her say Obaro? Who then is Bakayoko?

James: who should we believe now?

Me: I think we should believe her. We only imagined that Bakayoko guy through findings but this person is speaking on facts.

Henry: Hmmm. I'm still not settled anywhere.

James: Should we now tell Prince-will about this?

Me: I would prefer the girl finishes what she has to say first.

James: Then call her *na*

Me: *Shey you deaf when she say she go call me back?*

James: *Nor vex.*

One minute of silence followed but was broken by the ringing of my phone. I checked my phone and positive enough, it was the girl that called back. I picked the call the same second I checked the number.

Me: he-hello?

Girl: sorry for the interruption. I had to attend to my mum first.

Me: it's no problem.

Girl: where are you now?

Me: I'm in school.

Girl: I think it will be better we meet somewhere now.

Me: Meet somewhere?

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Girl: Yeah. I know you don't trust me and I don't expect you to. But just do this because of your girlfriend.

Me: eh eh ehmm

Girl: You know what? Choose a location by yourself and I will come to meet you there but it must be outside school environment.

Me: Wait let me call you back.

Girl: Okay.

I ended the call and turned to my friends.

Me: You heard it all. What am I supposed to do?

Henry: *Nor go.*

James: No. *Make we go.* I think the girl is real.

Henry: *I sure say na like this we go take die.*

Me: *If na to see this girl, na im go kill me, make e be.*

James: *So which place we go tell am make she come meet us now?*

Me: *Na public place o.*

Henry: *Filling station abi market?*

Me: *Your head don loose network abi? Who go save you for those places wey you call?*

Henry: *Uya make we go police station.*

James: *How you go call person go police station. If them call you, you go go?*

Henry: *Wait a. We go just stay near the station. Should kasala burst, we go just run enter there.*

Me: *Then, them go arrest us.*

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Henry: *And so? e nor better say them arrest you than say those wicked boys use battle axe label you?*

James: *Na true sha. Na wetin we go do be that.*

Me: *Uya na, make I call the girl.*

I called her and told her to meet me by the chemist shop opposite police station and she said I should let her know once I get there and I ended the call. I never told her we would be three. The plan was that if she was preparing to hurt me, her plans for one person won't be able to succeed three people unless we are just pregnant men. So we went outside the school gate and boarded a keke to hide ourselves at least. The next 15 minutes saw us at our destination. With Henry and James standing some distance away from me, I called the girl and told her I have gotten there then she asked me to give her 100 seconds. Immediately I ended the call, I started looking left, right, up, down, front and back in succession that if a police man notices me he may even arrest me. It wasn't up to 1 minute after I ended the call, my phone started ringing. It was Ifeyinwa so I picked immediately and she said

'Look at the chemist shop by your right'.

I turned slowly and looked at the shop and I saw two girls. One was beautiful, the other was the opposite. Even though I wanted to save a life, a prayer was going on in my mind

'God please she must not be the ugly one'

Like I came to play, the two girls started walking in my direction. I don't like rough play so I changed my direction to where James and Henry were standing to see who follows me and to God be the glory, the dark tall slim fitted fine girl appeared to be Ifeyinwa while the other one went her way.

It was a good start and I felt well about it. When the girl met us, she greeted and we responded. Then she said referring to my two guys

'James and Henry *abi*'?

Me: Yeah. Seems you know much about me.

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Ifeyinwa: Yeah. I told you that already.

Me: But we've never met.

Ifeyinwa: But I've met your work. I knew you and your friends from your story.

Me: Which story again?

Ifeyinwa: My Days in Trixwin.

Me: Hmmm. I didn't know that would save me someday.

Ifeyinwa: Definitely, it will today. So straight to business. I know you have questions to ask but save that for later. We need to act and act fast.

Me: But what do you stand to gain in helping me?

Ifeyinwa: First of all, someone asked me to save you. And again, when you finally go in and vote the other guy as the speaker, he is going to appoint me the 'sergeant at arm'.

Me: I see.

Ifeyinwa: Overlook all that now. It isn't important. Let's plan to save your girlfriend that you may never see again after today.

Me: Okay. So how do we go about it?

Ifeyinwa: I know where she is. But we need all the tactics in this world to go and come back successfully.

Henry: *We nor fit take police go there?*

James: *No na. Nor be everything police dey do.*

Ifeyinwa: yes. This is a case of '*cunny man die, cunny man bury am.*' If we involve police, we may not be free at the end.

Me: That's true. So you that know the condition of things, what do we do now?

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Ifeyinwa: Good. She's in one hostel around the environments of 'Our Lady Hostel'. I know the hostel and the room but the issue is that there are people guarding the room and we need to eliminate them if we must succeed.

Henry: Does eliminate mean we are going to kill them?

Ify: No. Eliminate means we are going to get them off our way by all means if we must succeed.

Me: okay, good. I ask again, how do we achieve this.

Ifeyinwa: We are going to strike this night if you want to see that girl again. I have plans already. But do you trust me?

Me: Yeah. Say 98%.

Ify: I understand. You need to see somebody now, follow me.

We followed her in good fate without knowing what awaits us.

She led the journey while we followed. If my friends didn't pray, I was praying in my mind for the better to happen.

She was the shepherd while we followed as a flock of sheep. In a short time, she entered a bar *abi* restaurant and we did same then she asked us to seat down. She excused herself and walked into an apartment just by the bar. Henry asked in a low tone '*where she dey go?*' Before I could reply him, James said, 'anywhere she like make she go, she go come back'

Me: Yes *na*. Something must kill a man.

Chapter 8

Not up to 5 minutes, she came out from the house, walked up to us and asked us to follow her. At this point, it was almost like we were between the devil

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and the deep blue sea. There was no so much time to think so we followed her in again good fate. We got to the place she came out from and she asked us to seat down. It was a vast sitting room with good enough design and arrangement to be called beautiful. I was personally not getting it when she looked for a space and sat down. I couldn't hold it any longer and I asked

'Miss, I thought you said you wanted to show us someone?'

Yea, I just want you to feel comfortable first, she said.

Henry: Abeg, we are comfortable already.

Ifeyinwa: Alright. Just be calm.

The next thing we saw, the curtain of a door leading to where I don't know opened and a beautiful dark figure walked inside. Behold it was Joy. The same Joy that I wished to be with at all times until the day she disgraced me publicly at the community town hall. The same Joy that I met together with Ann the day this whole thing started at the ID card centre. The very beautiful short Joy. She walked up to the centre of the room and stood still. From the way I was seeing things, she felt powerless so I stood up and walked up to her. I held her by her shoulder and we looked into each other's eye; then in a lost voice she asked

'Can you forgive me?'

Me: Yeah. Have forgiven you already.

Joy: Thanks. Don't worry, we will talk about this later. Let's save your girlfriend first. There are a lot to be explained.

In my mind I was reasoning, why is everyone referring to Ann as my girlfriend; *na* them toast her for me? Well, that doesn't matter now; I concluded.

I went back and sat down while she sat just opposite us and discussion started.

Ifeyinwa: Alright everyone. This is Joy as you all know already. She is the one saving Ann not me. So it's over to her. Let her talk to us.

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Joy: I know there are many questions running in your mind but don't worry, at the end of everything, you would find the answer to your questions. To start with, Obaro is my boyfriend. He is a bloody guy but I just found myself attached to him. Though by now, I believe God brought him my way to allow me save Ann today. I have a really long speech to give but the time will come later. Now let's save Ann. Kelv, can you trust me this time around?

Me: Sure.

Joy: Good. Now the security in that house is jokingly tight. You will see guys just hanging around without knowing they are actually guarding something. In other words, there is no way we can take Ann without shedding blood which is bad for us.

Henry: It's bad o.

Joy: Yeah, I know. And that is why I devised something better. Now listen. At night, once they are all at home, I will call him and tell him I'm coming to visit him. Then later, a guy amongst you will call him with my line and tell him that I was kidnapped and he needs to come and take me in *so so so* place. I'm very sure he's going to pack his all his boys along with him. Then at this point, we can rush into the hostel and do our thing.

Me: Hmmm. That sounds pretty cool but it's quite dangerous.

Joy: Yeah. But there's no better option and we lack time. We have just this night.

Henry: What about some guys stay back?

Joy: That is why we need to pray before going. We need perfect luck to be on our side.

Ifeyinwa: So do you agree to that or you guys have a better plan?

Me: right now, my head is too heavy to think. So I have to accept what I have at my feet.

Joy: Good. If you accept, we have to plan things now.

She looked at Ifeyinwa and did all those girls eye talk and Ifeyinwa left for inside room. She came back with a paper and dropped it on the table. I began to wonder if

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the girl was really studying Business Administration or she was reading Crime and Detection. The drawing on the paper were pure definition of expertise. It showed the landscape of the hostel and the particular room Ann was. She also mapped out how close she was going to be to us. The thing was easy to understand and I loved it.

So it was time for who will bell the cat things and she asked

Joy: We need say like 5 people. 2 guys will go get her, while like 3 people will be with me to increase the number of people that will speak to him and that will trigger him to leave with everybody.

Me: I understand. But the thing is that we are not up to 5 here. We are just 2. Me and James.

Henry: Count me, I will come.

Me: Okay, 3 now.

Ifeyinwa: Add me.

Joy: Good. So we can manage ourselves. The dress is black and black.

Me: Okay, so when and where are we going to meet?

Joy: We meet here by 8pm. No African time please.

Me: Gotten. We need to leave now so as to prepare ourselves before time.

Joy: Okay no problem.

We left immediately and went to my place. No one wanted to say something about the whole plan until my phone rang and it was Prince-will calling. This was how things took another shape.

After we greeted, he apologised for his failure to call the previous day as he promised. I told him it's no problem and he asked for the recent updates. I told him everything I've found out and the one that an old friend in Joy told me about and then amidst doubt, I exposed our night plans to him. Prince-will proved a certified

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raw man. After I finished telling him my moonlight tale, he started by telling me I should have given him reports since. I apologised then he continued by comparing my findings to Joy's report. According to him Bakayoko, was Obaro's football name, main reason he carries a brown colored hair (trying to look like Bakayoko). I've never seen him before but I was delighted to hear after everything that there was just one target. The thing was becoming as clear as crystal, as he had two nicknames, definitely, simple people like Joel will only know his football name 'Bakayoko' while deep people may be the only people opportuned to know him by 'Obaro'. To end the call, Prince-will told me his plans and tactics and asked me to keep it to myself (exactly what I'm doing now). His proposed plan was similar to what Joy earlier brought but still had a huge difference. I was the only one who knew about it even though it was too difficult for me to keep to myself, I tried my best accepting to take the blame if it goes wrong.

As it was still noon, Henry went home for two reasons. To confuse his parents with reasons best known to him that he won't be sleeping at home and again to get his black uniform while me and James sat back trying to while away time by checking the clock from time to time.

Just early in the evening, my phone started ringing and when I checked, it was the rubbish guy calling with Ann's line. I didn't know what I would reply his questions so I dumped the phone. He continued calling then James picked the call and told him the owner of the phone was charging it. It worked well as he stopped calling. Assuredly, seconds grew into minutes and minutes into hours. Time walked pass 5pm and then 6pm. There was still no sight of Henry and I was beginning to believe he won't make it. At 7pm, me and James moved over to his house, looked for something light to eat and finally put on our kit. We looked at ourselves and saw that we so much looked like criminals to anyone who would see us walking together that early night. For that reason, we pulled it off and packaged them in James' school bag and I carried it. It was 7:30pm already and we had to leave. There was still no sign of Henry and we didn't bother to call him with the belief that if he wanted to come, he would have come since.

So I came outside first while James followed. After locking the door, we just turned to face our exit way when we saw one figure rushing towards us with a bag hung to his back. It was easy to identify the person as Henry with his slim leg. We were to ask him what kept him for so long but he was busy saying 'let's go, let's go'.

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We accepted his 'let's go command' and got on our way. As we matched, I took my time to say a serious prayer in my mind. If anything must happen, let it happen to me, I can't come and go and kill my friends. They are innocent and I may not be able to live with the regrets and guilt. At a point, my faith energy got some boost and my belief was cemented at the fact that whether it be it good or bad, in any condition, that no matter what happens, we all will return home complete and safe.

The distance between our house and Ifeyinwa's house was just an eight-minute distance on foot. So as we trekked closer to our meeting point, Henry revealed, *'nor be small thing o, I nor for come self if nor be my mama. I tell them say I dey go programme wey you (me) invite me come but my papa say him mind nor accept am say make I nor go until later this night wey my mama come put mouth before he gree'*

Me: *Hmmm, your papa mind work pass another thing o.*

Henry: *Dey there na. You wan joke with person wey dey wear long tie go church every day. I even carry bible pass them for parlour to show them say I nor dey joke.*

James: *Them nor ask you why you carry bag?*

Henry: *Bag ke? I don carry my bag pass gate since I reach house for afternoon.*

Me: *Now I know I've been keeping criminals as friends.*

James: *Come nor insult me o, I go just go back from here.*

Me: *Uya nor vex.*

All things looked set when we got to Ifeyinwa's compound by 7:50pm. It seemed they were already waiting for us as they walked up to meet us half way into the vast compound already in their dark uniform. We asked for some time and they gave us which allowed us change into our outfit.

I wasn't too surprised when we got ready to leave and Ifeyinwa called us back to pray. After the short prayer, we started our journey for survival. In our presence, Joy called the Obaro guy and asked him if he was at home and he said yes then she

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told him she was on her way coming which the guy accepted with full gladness. If you want to kill a man, use a woman, it works.

So we started the journey in full. I laughed at myself when I saw what was ahead, the most dangerous thing I've ever did in my life previously was going to press the gate alarm of a man while we wait for his gateman to come and chase us with cane and the thing was sweet. This one, I don't even know the taste.

About 10 minutes after we boarded a bike, we stopped, making us believe we've gotten to our destination. Before we could ask the price, Joy brought out money and settled the bill. I didn't bother to thank her.

So we in a single file, went to one corner and listened as Joy described things.

That is the hostel over there, she said pointing to one building. So now, I will call him and make my report while we stay here and watch them leave one after there other. So James, hope you know what to do, she asked. Sure, James replied. Then she dialled Obaro's number and gave the phone to James.

'Baby' Obaro said from the other end. I never knew James could act that much. He started laughing wicked man laugh and ended it with

'Your baby dey my hand now, if you wan see her alive come Ishiagu college come collect am'

Obaro: *You say wetin?*

James: *Oga you hear me well. If you get squad, then come and challenge me for your girl's life.*

Obaro: *Who you be?*

James: *when you come you go know? You have 15 minutes to get here and it's already counting.*

Then James ended the call. 'Good job', Joy commented. From our hidden dark corner, it wasn't up to 40 seconds, we saw one guy run out from the hostel Joy pointed for us, jumping and shouting but what he was saying, we could not hear very well. I was becoming positive about everything when I saw that happen. The

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next 5 minutes saw guys exiting through the gate one after the other. Then one guy with his phone close to his ear matched out with a long black *cele* gown.

'That's Obaro' Joy confirmed.

Ifeyinwa: We are making progress then.

Joy: Hopefully.

Me: If Obaro, the boss is out, does that mean that everyone who needs to be out is out.

Joy: Supposedly. It's just that I was expecting 14 of them to come out but only 12 did.

James: That's bad news. It's obvious they stayed back to look after Ann.

Joy: We can't give up. We still need to do something.

Me: So what is it?

Joy: Now we are going to cross over the road and sneak to the back of the hostel. We all must be careful in doing this. When we get there, we will take the next decision. Okay?

'Cool', I said.

We sat back as we watched our lady lord skilfully cross the road and cement herself on the gutter by the way. We had to do same in same manner. In 2 minutes, we all were in the gutter. I felt like laughing for a moment but I didn't want to discourage others. It was then that Joy's phone started ringing and it was Obaro.

'What do I tell him', James asked.

Joy: answer the call, when you hear his question, you will know what to answer him.

Then James picked the call and he thundered

'Make sure nothing happens to my girl'

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James: That's if you're strong enough.

Obaro: Then show yourself when I come, don't be a coward.

James: I'm your master. I'm waiting.

This pained the Obaro guy that he let out a loud shout before James ended the call.

Joy: That's good. Now we need to do everything in a short time.

Without saying anything, she moved and we followed her. That was how we were rolling inside gutter like relocating rats. The good thing was that it was a dried gutter and quite neat as the street people cleaned it the previous week. Little did they know they were cleaning it for us.

I don't know where Joy learnt all her calculations from. Immediately she got to the edge of the hostel's fence, she stopped and asked us to do what she will do one after the other. We didn't say anything, meaning we heard her. She asked me to look if anyone was watching and I confirmed that we were safe then she pressed hard on the gutter frame and rolled to the side of the fence. In the next 60 seconds we all did same and were lying on the ground. Then our lady commander announced again.

'Now we are going to the back of the hostel. There is a hole that Obaro and his mates made as emergency exit way. We are probably going to use that place, it's safer though rougher but it remains the best available option for now'

Henry: We can't argue so move, let's go and do it.

She moved while we followed. In a very short time, we were at the back of the hostel. We all watched as Joy located a spot in the dark, packed out the grasses on it with her hand and met a metal cover. It was happening like a magic movie. I just smiled in believe that Obaro was really a don. Then Joy removed the metal cover and starting teaching us in a fast tone:

'This place leads to the back of one of the buildings'

She brought out the paper she showed us in the afternoon and made finishing touches to what she earlier explained which included the position of Obaro's room

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in the compound. Then she asked if we all understood the condition of things and we responded positively. Lastly, she announced

'This tunnel can contain only one person at a time, and to avoid clustering it, we need just one person to go in there so that when he is coming back with the girl, they won't have to queue in other to pass'

Me: That's not a problem, I will go.

Joy: Okay.

Henry: But wait. The other time, you said two guys didn't leave the hostel, so what do we do about them?

Joy: Yeah, that's true. I don't know what we are going to do *o*. I'm out of idea now.

James: That's a big problem now.

Ifeyinwa: Hmmm, I now know why I followed you people. I know what to do.

Joy: What's that.

Ifeyinwa: I will go inside through the gate to confirm.

Henry: Who will you tell them you're looking for?

Ifeyinwa: Don't worry. They know me already. I use to go there with Joy so I will tell them Joy told me come that she was there.

James: Perfect.

Joy: *Uya* go and come back fast. There is no time and we are waiting.

As she walked away, we could hear our hearts beating randomly at the speed of *keke*. Everyone was in suspense. To me it was just like, tell me the end first and tell me how it happened later. In 3 minutes, Ify got back.

Joy: What is it?

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Ifeyinwa: It's clear. Only few guys (who are not members of Obaro's team) are in the compound but they can't see the part of Obaro's room.

Me: I have to go now.

James: Good luck.

Henry: come back safe.

As I jumped into the tunnel, Joy put her hand into somewhere in her body, brought out key and threw it to me. I didn't need any explanation about the key. It's even foolishness that I never thought of asking for one.

With my dim phone screen light, I travelled through the tunnel believing in God like I've never done before. Finally, I got to the end of the tunnel and there was something covering it. I pushed it slightly and it opened. I brought out my head and viewed the environment, everything was same as Joy did explain. I remained there and calculated the doors I was seeing and finally, I got the door by counting 4 doors from the one closest to me.

I came out of the tunnel and sneaked to the wall. I laid my ear and everywhere was calm. I crawled to the 4th door with my heart beating rapidly. With my body flat to the wall, I slot the key into the key hole with my left hand and fortunately, it opened. I entered inside and switched on my touch but there was no Ann.

My heart skipped a beat. I was disappointed. There was nothing I could do than leave immediately. As I turned to leave, I felt I needed to work at least. I saw three different curtains. The first one I opened had a door, when I pushed the door open, it was a bathroom and Ann was there hand, leg and mouth tied. I rushed to the guy's kitchen, got a knife and loosed her. She made to hug me but I made her understand we don't have such time.

I dragged her by her hand as I matched outside. I locked the door smoothly and everything seemed to be working perfectly. We passed the other three doors and we were soon at the tunnel way. Getting to the tunnel point, something looked strange. It was closed but I could remember I didn't close it. As I bent down to open it, someone's hand covered my mouth and at the same time something I felt to be a gun was placed on my waist then I raised my two hands up.

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The only words in my mouth were 'please don't shoot that thing, please don't shoot that thing' but I couldn't say it as I understood his covering of my mouth was enough warning that I should keep mute.

It's not easy to accept death *sha*, the thing is too scary because no one knows the world after death. Forget how I'm narrating it now, everything happened before one could say Jack Robinson.

I assumed we were already caught so I freed myself to take instructions from the person holding a gun to my waist. He started moving backward, dragging me along and I followed immediately. I didn't even have the opportunity to look back to know Ann's situation. Ahhh, when you don't fear the gun, you should fear the bullet o. In a few second, we were at the back of one of the buildings in the hostel. Then the person at my back said

'Shhhhhhhh, it's me'.

It was too surprised that I forgot his command and mentioned his name

'Prince-will?'

Guy: Yeah. Just shut up.

He freed me and I turned to confirm it was truly him. Another guy was with him who gave Ann her own share of the kidnap. Immediately she released Ann, she came to my back then Prince-will said

'Follow me quietly'.

Me: some people are waiting for me out there.

Prince-will: I know but this is the best for you now. Obaro already knows you are here.

Without further argument, I followed him with Ann beside me. We took a long but quick and silent walk till we got to the end of the long building. He asked us to wait while he spied to make sure the route was clear. Then he looked back at us and waved his hand in a way meaning that we should follow me. We obeyed and immediately we left the back of the building, a bright light flashed to our direction meaning someone was already after us but I was sure the light didn't catch us.

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When we turned to the front of the building, the door of the first room was already opened, he stayed back and asked us to enter. We entered immediately and when he entered he closed the door.

I was almost feeling relieved but the worry of where my friends were won't allow me. I prayed silently that they be in good condition. I picked up my phone and dialled James' number but he wasn't picking. I tried Henry's and Ifeyinwa's but none of them picked the call. I had more reason to be worried. Ann didn't know all these people were outside because of her so she was busy resting on my shoulder. Before I could talk to Prince-will, he started a talk on the phone.

'What's the condition?'

'Okay good, try to put things in order and make sure no one escapes'

'Yeah, I will join you very soon, I still have work to do'.

Then he ended the call. I had midst feeling about his words not knowing what to think of it. I ignored the call thing and asked him

'What do I do about my friends? There are four of them out there'

Prince-will: nothing. Just rest here. Hopefully, they are fine.

I was not in peace but before I could ask another question he said

'I will be back soon'. Without letting anybody say something, he opened the door and dashed out. That gave Ann the opportunity to ask 'who are the four people outside?'

Me: James, Henry, Joy and Joy's friend.

Ann: who's Joy?

Me: The Joy the both of us know.

Ann: Ahhh. Where did you see her?

Me: She's the one that brought us to save you. You will hear the full story later.

She wanted to keep on asking but the call that came to my phone shut her mouth. I was afraid when I looked at the caller and it was James. I prayed it doesn't be a

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strange voice (you know what that means) before picking the call. Fortunately, it was James.

James: (in a curious tone) *Guy where you dey? You dey safe?*

Me: Yeah. *Very safe. Where una dey?*

James: *We dey bush like this o.*

Me: *Ahhh, wetin happen?*

James: *Kasala burst but nor worry, we dey okay. What of Ann? You see am?*

Me: Yeah, she's with me now. What of Henry and the girls?

James: All safe.

Me: Thank God.

James: *But where una dey now?*

Me: *We dey inside one room for the hostel. Na Prince-will carry us go there.*

James: Prince-will?

Me: Yeah. *Nor worry, I go gist you later.*

James: *We fit go house?*

Me: *Yeah. Make una go. Call me once una reach house.*

After the call, I felt like a man whose wife finally put to bed after 15 years of marriage without a child. I looked at the waiting Ann and started petting her. The other guy was just in the room still and silent. I decided to play along and we all kept mute.

When I opened my eyes, I realised I just woke up from sleep. I stretched my hand and picked up my phone. I checked and time was 4:38am. There was a message after 4 missed calls from James. I opened the message and it reads

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'This one way you nor dey pick call, hope no problem. We don reach house sha'.

I pointed my screen light to the room and Ann was still deep in sleep. The other guy was also sleeping. There was no sign of Prince-will in the room. I first replied James' message to make him feel okay when he wakes up. Then I set a 6 o'clock alarm and went back to sleep.

I woke up later to see the time was just 5:58am. I smiled and switched off the alarm. My spirit was really working. Almost immediately, the guy woke up and I greeted him. Like our voices were disturbing, Ann woke up. She turned to my direction and instead of greeting, she winked me. I took the pillow close to me and hit her. The guy just smiled and walked into the bathroom. The next thing we heard was pee sound from the bathroom. He was still in the bathroom when a knock hit the door. I hesitated for a while until the person announced *'Open, na me Prince-will'*. I confirmed the voice and went to open the door immediately.

He came inside and sat down. We greeted and he asked Ann how she was feeling and the girl said 'fine'.

I started by apologizing to him that I slept off that was why I didn't call him to know his whereabouts when he left. The girl smiled and then said

'Don't worry, I'm only doing my work'

Me: Which work? You come Ogwashi uku because of me?

Prince-will: (smiling) No. But because of people like Obaro.

He put his hand in his jacket, brought out an ID card and pointed it at me. I used my phone's touch to see it very well. Behold, Prince-will was a police officer.

It was difficult to believe then he explained that he was in the school for peace keeping and not really for a certificate. 'there are many of us here' he further explained.

I was short of words.

Prince-will: don't worry, about 9 of Obaro's men are at the police station now while the rest who were lucky to escape are on the run now.

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The other guy came out from the bathroom and referred to Prince-will as sir. Prince-will then introduced him to me as his spy as they have at least one spy in every hostel suspected to have bad gangs.

I thanked him for everything and all he could do was smile.

At 7am, Prince-will told us we were free to go home but to make sure we don't go close to school, as it was Friday and SUG election day. 'Wetin I dey go there go do before?'

Before 30 minutes, we were at James' place. I only met James. He said Henry just left. I was happy to hear that everyone came back safely. It was at that point I saw how well Ann emaciated. It was normal for any fish that has been out of its water for 3 days to lose weight like that. Then I asked her

'Hope they didn't touch you?'

Ann: Not at all. I even dey chop three times a day. The guy dey call himself speaker *na*, so he dey spend.

I laughed at how mischievous the guy ended. James got something and we ate. Henry later came back around 10am so we called Joy and Ifeyinwa and we gathered at James' room. I told them how everything happened and how Prince-will managed to get there. When I told Prince-will about our plan, he told me he will be at our back but I thought he was joking. Henry and James were shocked when I told them he was a policeman. They didn't want to believe until Ann helped me. It was their turn to tell me how to survived.

Henry: *We just dey there dey wait make una come out o. The next thing wey we see, one mumu dey waka come where we dey so we crawl enter bush. Na there we con dey dey see guys dey run up and down. E be like say na then Police people dey pursue them. Then when we call you and you say you dey okay, we come follow bush burst out road come from there go house.*

Joy: *So finally, Obaro dey run for this school. Thank God.*

Ifeyinwa: *But you know say that guy love you.*

Joy: *But I nor want na. That guy dey beat me o. Na out of fear I take dey date am. Fear nor let me tell am say I nor do again.*

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Ifeyinwa: *Uya oga Trixwin, you don see your girlfriend so come buy drink for us.*

Me: *Una go drink before na.*

Ann: But I'm not your girlfriend.

Me: *Who come tell you say I wan make you be my girlfriend.*

We made different kinds of joke as it was our happy hour after days in pain. I later called Blessing, Ann's friend to come and join us and she was very happy to see Ann.

For 3 days, me and Ann lived in James' house. It was to confirm that Obaro won't come back for us. I was happy we did our operation without trace. That Friday night, Victor Egbunem aka Victor White was announced as the winner of the SUG Presidential election while the guy that made me start all this, Edhebru Joshua aka I-Robot got his seat as the SUG Fin Sec.

Two weeks after the SUG election, we sat at the hall graced by the Dean Student's Affairs and other big names to be sworn in as members of the SUG Legislative House. After the Dean addressed us, we were given a copy of the SUG constitution each and thereafter asked to nominate and vote our leaders. The senators chose Sen. Progress as the Senate President while we the Honourables elected Hon. Joseph as the Speaker. The Senate President and Speaker were asked to make appointments and fortunately enough, Ifeyinwa got what she wanted as the Speaker appointed her 'Sergeant at Arms'. I was not believing it when the Speaker appointed me as the Clerk of the lower house. I was never expecting it but I was happy it came. I was particularly happy for Ify- people that chase dreams and achieve them.

At the end of the ceremony, we were dismissed. Immediately I stepped outside with my new title 'Hon. Kelvin Ossai', Henry, James, Ann and Prince-will walked up to congratulate me. Then Ifeyinwa came to join us and she stretched forth her hand for a handshake; I clipped mine into hers and she said

'Thank you, I'm happy we made it'.

Me: If not for you people, it wouldn't have been possible.

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Prince-will: You guys were great and brave. By sending Obaro far away from this school, you just saved the school, students, and their government from downfall. Obaro wanted to destroy everything.

I saw the new Speaker stepping out and I walked up to him. I thanked him for the appointment and he said

'Ify told me all that happened, that was just one of the ways I could show appreciation. So many people who were not ready to come here to vote for me because of Obaro's threat came when they heard Obaro was out of town, thank you'

Me: It's not only me. Credit to this crew (pointing to the standing group made up of Henry, James, Ann, Ifeyinwa and Joy; Prince-will left, while Joy came in).

Hon. Joseph: Thank you guys. Together we're going to make DSPG great.

Me: Yeah, sure.

We ended our discussion and made to part ways with the new Speaker. He went back to meet the other guys while me and my friends went our way all smiles. Then my course mate, Joel and course rep, Kelvin coming from the library walked to us. Kelvin who knew Ann was once missing looked happy to see her again. Though I told him earlier via phone call. Then Joel asked,

'Why una dey shine teeth like this na?'

Me: It's about a girl, ANN.

KELVIN OSSAI

Connect with the author



BECAUSE OF ANN

I, Kelvin Ossai, popularly known as Kelv Kings am a Nigerian from Ogume in Ndokwa West LGA, Delta state. I graduated from Kings and Queens Academy, Ogume in 2014 and proceeded to Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi Uku where I studied Electrical/Electronic Engineering.

I am presently a student of Federal Polytechnic, Auchi in pursuit of my HND certification.

Though Engineering based, I have the heart and talent to inspire, educate and entertain through writing, evidence being that since 2015, I have written stories 'Because of Ann,' 'My Days in Trixwin,' 'My Days of Favour with Favour,' 'Round Leather Calculus World,' and 'Assurance' which is still in progress.

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