

A person with long hair, wearing a dark jacket, is seen from behind, standing in a library. The background is filled with rows of bookshelves packed with books. The lighting is dim, creating a quiet, studious atmosphere. 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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