

"Say Hi to the devil for me." I shot him, dead.

Juliet

I pop some pills into my mouth. These panic attacks are killing me. Damn. Constant migraines are my best friends now. To add my already terrible stress, I have to interview the unfortunate soul who's applied to fill Sarah's position while she goes on her maternity leave. It's crazy how some people have no sense of direction and are temps. I mean how? I check my watch for the time. 12:08pm. Ugh.... 2pm should come already and let's get this over and done with. I can't wait to meet who the lucky 'fella' is.

Nsoromma

It's 2:05pm when I walk over to the counter to speak to the receptionist at the counter. "You're late", she says after I introduce myself and state my purpose, "Mrs. Smith is in the meeting room."

My heart skipped a beat. Today of all days, that stupid bus driver was late. I thank her and make my way shamefacedly towards the meeting room. I knock lightly and enter. I sigh a muted sigh of relief as its black woman seated across me, maybe she'd do it for the sisterhood and cut me some slack.

She asks me to have a seat and introduce myself. She repeats my name and surprisingly she gets a spot on pronunciation. First stranger to get my name right since I moved here outside Efiepa, the Ghanaian restaurant where I waited on tables at night for extra income.

"Beautiful name, tell me more about yourself".

For some funny reason, that question always throws me off. '*Does anyone know who they really are?*' I fumble my way through an flimsy introduction.

She smiles and nods. She asks a series of questions and test my knowledge of being a secretary.

The interview ends and I thank her and make my out. I know I'm definitely not getting it. I'm lost in thought when I'm suddenly jerked back into reality when a car splashes water on me. Tears instantly fill my eyes. Asonafo) are really working hard against me today.

*Sniff *

Juliet

Worst interview of my life. No wonder she's a temp. I go through her file again.

Nsoromma Yaa Boaduaa Boateng, 09/11/1999.

She's pretty young, she's got potential, maybe I should give her a chance. I felt a sudden sharp pain at the left side of my head. I curse audibly. Mentally, I'm done for the day, I'm just here physically till its 5:00pm. I cannot be stressed.

Nsoromma

I texted my best friend, Amma. Amma Yetunde Oluwafunke Agyeiwaa Afolabi, my best friend in the whole world and practically the only family I have. Born to middle class parents, Nigerian dad and Ghanaian mother, lethal combination. I met her during my early days of waiting on tables at Efiropa, the Ghanaian restaurant which was four blocks away. 'Chic, I messed up'.

I messed up like I always do. Maybe it was life's way getting back at me for giving her away. *Sigh*.

Juliet

I lay on my back, half hypnotized, the bruise from his earlier hit on my head still throbbing. He was palpitating, his foul-smelling alcohol breath all over my face. He thrust in and out of me. He tore my faded t-shirt and squeezed my breasts. I could feel his sweat drip on my face, his nasty nasty sweat. His weight crushed me. I felt his body tremble, an indication that he had reached his climax. His warm sperm dribbled down my thigh. He got up and kicked me in my ribs. I lay there calmly with silent tears rolling down my face.

"Mummy, mummy, wake up.

I wake up staring at my daughter bleary-eyed. It's just a dream.

“Get mummy some water, ok”

She ran towards the kitchen to do my bidding.

It's just a dream. I said inwardly.

Who the fuck am I kidding? It's not just a dream, it's not. I lived that fucking reality which led me to the same river banks some 14 months after to drown the crying baby and all the memories attached.

Maybe, just maybe, that's why after a long twenty something years, I never had a child of my own no matter how hard I tried.

I mean, why would God give you another when you've already proven to be a killer.

Nsoromma

One day, I'd find him and put a bullet straight through his head.

It was a calm evening; I had made some really good tips from the customers that came around that evening. I did a mental calculation of how much I was going to said to Eno Serwa back home.

“Yaa, can you please do me a favour?”

Without turning, I knew it was Mr. Osei, the owner of the restaurant where I was a waitress. “I need you to drop off an order for me.” He went on to give me the details of the delivery.

“Don't worry, I'll give you extra cash. Tiwaa called in sick today so charley, *look sharp gimme.*”

Tiwaa, one of the waitresses usually handled Mr. Agyemang's orders. Mr. Agyemang was one of our regular clients. On days he couldn't pick up, Tiwaa did a home delivery for him, a special arrangement between he and Mr. Osei.

Ding Dong.

“Oh hi, Tiwaa couldn’t come today? That’s my special girl o, come in” He invited me in after I had greeted him. He had a very welcoming smile.

“Tiwaa always made sure I had eaten before I eat o, so how’s that gonna play out?”

“Pardon?”

“Oh c’mon, you’re not a small girl, you know what I mean, I’ll give you extra.”

“Sir please, I’d like to leave. Thank you”

“Don’t be too rigid, the struggle turns me on though”, He smiled and lick his lips.

I froze with fear, I was doomed.

Juliet

It was Monday morning, I had officially given up before lunchtime. My head was throbbing worse than before. I reached for my bag and took out a pack of ibuprofen. I was thinking about trying clinical weed, Johnny, my accountant, swore by it. The three interviews had gone terribly wrong.

I was a hot mess of emotions, guilt being predominant. *Ugh. Rockson Agyemang, you’ll suffer before you die. Ah.*

I remember how small and innocent she looked, my beautiful beautiful baby. I had planned

Fuck, I was just 19.

I wiped the single tear from my face and picked up my phone. I dialed the number on the file.

"Hi, am I speaking to Nsoromma Yaa Boaduaa Boateng?"

Nsoromma

"Please ma'am, when can I start?"

" Alright ma'am, I'll be there first thing tomorrow morning".

I was beside myself with joy. Looks like the Asonafo) didn't succeed this time. After texting Amma to break the news, I rummaged through my clothes to collate befitting clothes for at least the first week.

God, God bless you.

I texted Amma to come over when she could. We needed to celebrate.

Nsoromma

Two weeks in and I have made this job my bitch. For some funny reason, I liked it here. I usually hated most jobs but this, this seemed really cool. Juliet was really cool to work with.

"Hey baby girl" I rolled my eyes. It was Johnny, the IT guy. He irked me so much. In my first week, he took it upon himself to mansplain even the basic stuff, I mean, who even asked you? This week, he's taken to making advances at me.

"John, my name is Nsoromma, not baby girl nor sweetheart nor any of the other 'nicknames' you call me. He smirked, "I know girls like you, playing hard to get and all but are low-key sluts."

"Are you fucking for real? Leave me alone, asshole."

I picked up my already packed bag. I glanced at the digital wall clock, it read 18:15. I got so lost in paperwork I didn't realise how late it was. I did a mental calculation and I figured I had about an hour and half to make it in time for my night shift. I definitely didn't have the time for Johnny and his silly games.

He grabbed me by the throat and pushed me against the wall, "You like it rough, huh."

I tried to push him but he pressed his body against mine. I could feel his hot breath on my face. I was palpitating, my heart pounded like a million fufu pestles.

I dropped my bag and slapped his face. It seemed to send shock waves through his body because he left my throat, I grabbed the nearest flower vase and smashed it on his head creating a loud crashing sound.

“Who’s there?” I heard a voice ask down the hallway.

Fuck.

Juliet

I had pouted visibly as I returned to the office complex. My flask of chamomile tea was sitting comfortably on my desk. I realised I had left it back the office when I was just about to take my routine sip.

Chamomile tea had a way of calming my nerves. So I always prepared a hot flask at work to take on my drive back home.

I picked it up and made my way back to my car.

CRASH !

Instinctively, I shouted, “Who’s there?”

I didn’t expect anyone to be around by this time. Armed with my hot flask of tea, I made my way towards where the sound came from.

“Who’s there?” I asked again.

I met Nsoromma rushing out from the conference room which doubled as her work station.

I realised her hand was bleeding.

I instinctively shot into mother mode, “What happened? Who did this to you?”

She pointed to Johnny, the accountant, groaning while clutching his head on the floor.

“He touched me inappropriately, he wanted to rape me”

She burst into tears.

I flinched at the mention of rape.

Why on earth would you want to rape someone? Why would you force yourself on someone? The trauma it leaves the victims is indescribable. Some women end up taking their lives due to the emotional turmoil it puts them through.

It didn't help matters that those who chose to speak up against their perpetrators end up being stigmatised. In recent times, there's at least a level of solidarity for rape victims.

In my time, I was the loose slut who 'allowed' herself to be raped because she had dressed to 'attract' him.

Dressed to attract? For Pete's sake, I was in a t-shirt and linen shorts. Even if I were naked, it shouldn't have given him the right to violate my body.

Women in Africa are often stigmatised by the way they are dressed. A random man on the streets can decide to grope you or call you 'ashawo' just because you decided to wear shorts on an unbearably hot day.

I remember back on the streets of Accra, a man smack and ass saying, “Wo y3 me taste paa o.” I gave him the dirtiest slap of his life.

“How dare you?” I said angrily.

Passers-by shared their mixed sentiments. Some chastising the man for acting wrongly and provoking me, others siding with him saying I was just inappropriately.

One particular comment that struck me was from a middle-aged woman who looked at me disapprovingly, “You provoked him, with the way your *bortos* is moving up and down *bagam bagam*. You children of today dress too much like the *Abrofo*. Those people are

cultureless, they dress anyhow, you can be dressing like them. Be a proper *akatasia* and stop tempting men in the street.”

I gave her a look of pure venom and just walked away.

I cried premium tears that night. What the woman said stung my heart worse than the man’s harassment.

How was I cultureless because I wore leggings and a tank top? Is it my fault God gifted me a big nyash?

What culture is she talking about? The same ones in the history books where our people wore skins and cloth that barely covered their crotches and with beads that left their breasts exposed?

Fuck you, accra woman, fuck you.

Nsoromma

It was as though a dam in me had been opened. I was overflowing with tears. Juliet comforted me and assured me everything was going to be alright. She had taken me back to her house after giving John a sound slap and a strict warning never to set foot in the office again. I told her I was willing to press charges. She looked disappointed but didn’t want to probe.

She assured me I was going to be fine while rubbing my shoulders. I felt so much at ease. I cried recounting the rape ordeal I suffered as a teenager.

I never mentioned it to anyone, not even Eno Serwa but for some reason, I felt comfortable telling her.

I told her how that devil Rockson Agyemang, raped me.

I told her about Eno Serwa, how she found me at the river bank.

I told her about the baby. I told her about how I gave up her. I had mouth diarrhea. I recounted my life to her like a movie without sparing even the gory details. I was tired of *forming* hard girl, I wanted to offload, maybe it might make me feel better. The pain came rushing back. She looked at me as though she had seen a ghost, who could blame her, I'm a monster who gave up her child for money.

Juliet

I froze in fear. Rockson Agyemang raped her and she had a baby? And she gave the baby up for adoption and used the money to migrate to the states? Ei Rockson Osei.

That same fucking bastard who raped me? And I also had a child? Damn, the man was fertile.

What the fuck? My head is messy right now. It's beyond reasonable doubt that Nsoromma is my daughter. The baby I abandoned at the banks of the river is Nsoromma. I remember Eno Serwa vaguely, she lived on the outskirts of the town and rumour had it, she had seen a ghost or something that's why she was always muttering to herself. She was the village 'cuckoo head'.

She saved my baby and raised her. How do I even tell her she's my baby? *Ei Awurade, what do I do?*

Nsoromma

It was a chilly night. I was palpitating. My palms clammy with sweat from apprehension. I pressed the doorbell. I pulled the hood of my jacket over my head.

The door opened. He stood before, slightly aged with specks on greys in his hair. He looked at me quizzically.

I clocked the gun.

"Say Hi to the devil for me." I shot him, dead.

Glossary of Words and Phrases

Nsoromma- Stars in Twi, a language spoken predominantly by the Akan tribe in Ghana.

Efiepa – Good home in Twi

Asonafo)- Asona is a clan in the Akan tribe of Ghana

Temp-

Look sharp gimme – An informal plead asking for help

Fufu – a local staple in Ghana prepared with a mortar and pestle usually eaten with soup.

Ashawo – Prostitute

Bortos – corruption of the English word, buttocks

Wo y3 me taste paa o – loosely translated, you are my taste, in Twi. Usually used when someone is romantically interested in another person.

Abrofo- White people in Twi

Akatasia- A proper young lady, in Akan.

Ei Awuarade- Ei God, in akan

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