

**MISS KOI**

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(Bello's Grandson)**

Numbers and letters could be seen everywhere as the teacher's red marker made screeching noises on the whiteboard. It was mathematics, and the students were all tired from the search of missing exes. Their eyes fixated on the wall clock just above the board, waiting for the long hand to strike six so the sound of the bell would call off the search. The jingles of the bell whenever the clock said 10:30 always brought smiles to the students' faces but never to Mr. Kayode's, their math teacher. He complained on how unserious they were as he heard and saw them chatter their way out of the class; it was their break time.

Tunde was just a couple of steps away from the food vendor when his friends caught up with him. They wore disapproving looks, and he wasted no time in apologizing the best way he could.

"Shebi you guys were still in the class, and I told you earlier I was hungry," he said.

"Commot abeg, na only you sabi food?" One of his friends blurted, while others laughed.

They all got their respective food and talked their way back to the class. There was an awkward silence as soon as the topic of a certain Miss Koi Koi was brought up. The students looked at one another, broke the silence with laughter, and began telling stories of their cowardice.

"Omo, I fear last night o. Just the thought of her name, and I almost peed myself," one said.

"Me too! I was just reciting Psalm 23 till I fell asleep," another added.

"So, you said her name?" Tunde asked.

"Said fire. Na me una wan use do scapegoat."

Tunde laughed and proceeded to tell his story. Apparently, he was the bravest of his friends; he made it out at midnight and could only say the 'Miss' title before his mind battled fear but lost.

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Tunde was departing Nigeria to study in Princeton University, USA; and felt it was a better time to go through his archive for past memories. The Miss Koi Koi scare topped his best moments as he reminisced on the time he had with his friends. He was left with a bittersweet emotion as the plane's engines roared and got ready for takeoff.

The first couple of weeks was a tough one as he found it difficult to settle, but soon got a hold of things since his new friend, Kevin, came his way. Kevin was also a Nigerian, but only by nationality; he had spent most part of his life in the State and knew little or nothing of Nigeria, making him and Tunde a perfect fit. Kevin had given Tunde a direction to a local store where they were to meet to get supplies that would take them through the semester. Tunde was at the other side of the road when he scanned and saw his new friend waiting just outside the store. Their eyes met and the street became oceanic as they exchanged a couple of waves. Tunde watched out for moving vehicles while crossing the road, but not at the white man who bumped into him. He turned and sent his arms in opposite directions as a form of protest, but his gesture was thwarted by the white man's two middle fingers. He chuckled in dismay and soon continued his journey to meet Kevin who had witnessed what happened.

“I must tell you; you will be reminded quite often and in a non-pleasant way, something you know you are,” said Kevin in an attempt to start a conversation.

“My pigmentation? You know, it is definitely my first time here in person, but I’ve been here on several occasions through books and internet,” replied Tunde.

“I know, right? You know about racism, but how do you feel witnessing it first hand?”

“We have our own share of internalized racism back home, trust me.”

“I think I chose the wrong topic for a conversation starter. I must warn you; I am a sucker for starting awkward convos,” said Kevin.

“Your warning is coming rather late, don’t you think?” Tunde said with a wry smile.

“Ha-ha! Let’s go get what we need, shall we?”

The duo entered the store and walked up and down the aisles in search of what they came for, and got further acquainted as they were at it. Although their line of study was different, an elective course made sure they had something in common; MYTH 101.

“SHUT UP!!! You also take Mythology as a course?” Kevin asked gleefully.

“Yeah, I had to fill my credit load one way or the other,” Tunde replied.

“But I’ve never noticed you in class,” said Kevin.

“Maybe because the class is a large one?”

“Nigerians and sarcasm.”

“What do you mean ‘Nigerians’?” Tunde had his cold stare turned on.

“C’mon! I know I’m Nigerian, but you also know I’m not Nigerian.”

“You make absolutely no sense. Try involving in a crime and see your origin being traced back to when your great-grandfather had his first sex.”

“Argh! You Nigerians and arguments,” Kevin teased.

Tunde’s cold stare remained on, and Kevin could see his friend trying hard to hold back his anger. He cracked few jokes to diffuse the situation, Tunde saw right through it and accepted his hidden apology. They both wheeled the items they had gotten to the counter, paid, and left.

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“Icarus did not heed to his father’s instruction and as a result, had a great fall after he flew too close to the...”

Kevin had his attention divided and could barely understand what the professor was saying. He had his eyes darting to the class’s entrance at intervals, hoping to see Tunde walk in. It wasn’t long before that happened; Tunde shuffled his way into the class. The professor had a short pause and

the students took that as a hint to whine. Kevin waved and signalled to Tunde to create the awareness that there was an unoccupied seat beside his, and watched as his friend found his way to him.

“Dude, why are you coming this late?” Kevin questioned.

“My alarm couldn’t wake me, I overslept and I’m still tired” replied Tunde, trying to suppress a yawn.

“I can tell. You’ve missed most of the lecture already; a group assignment was given.”

“Cool! So, we are together?”

“I have filled a group already. You should look around; some groups are still a few people short.”

“That would be after the class. What’s the assignment about anyway?”

“Write on any myth—”

“Shh, keep it down.”

A shush was all it took to keep the boys from talking. They paid attention to the man standing before them and also took down some notes. The professor kept going till a beep from his watch compelled him to stop; his period was over. He packed his materials into his briefcase, said his goodbye, and left the class.

“So, what’s the assignment ab—”

Tunde was kept shut for the second time, not by a shush, but in awe of the pretty girl standing close to them.

“Hey, I saw you come late to class and I’m sure you’ve got no group yet. Care to join us? We are only a person short.” She said pointing to the people a few feet away from her.

“Sure!” Tunde replied.

“Great! We will meet at the school library by noon; we are doing it the old-fashioned search.”

“Wouldn’t it be faster with the aid of internet?” Tunde asked.

“And miss a chance to interact and bond? Where is the fun in that?”

“She is right though, my group is also doing it the old-fashioned way,” Kevin chipped in.

“Okay! Which of the libraries?” Tunde asked.

“L.S.L,” she replied.

“Lewis Science,” Kevin said as he heard his friend’s silent call for help.

“Yeah, that library,” the girl said, before she walked off.

Tunde wiped off invisible sweatballs from his forehead and heaved a sigh immediately the girl was a distance away from earshot.

“She is fucking hot,” said Tunde, with a wide smile.

“So hot she burned away from your brain the thought of asking for her name.”

“Woah-ha-ha, that was a good one. That was a good one.”

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Tunde got to the library earlier than the time given and chose a spot where he would be easily seen. He reached for one of the books he had in his bag to keep himself busy till the rest of the group arrived.

“You are here already.”

Tunde raised his head to see the figure standing before him; it was her. His brain took a while before it could come up with something.

“Yeah! Realized I didn’t get your name earlier,” he finally said.

“Here I was thinking you were eager for the assignment.”

“That too. I’m Tunde by the way,” he said, wearing his cutest smile.

“Rachel.”

“That’s a pretty name. You know, I do not know what the assignment is about.”

“We are to discuss as a group, any myth of our choice. But you know the main assignment is making the right research.”

“Yea—”

“Great! The guys are here. We should be getting ready for work.”

Rachel stood up to meet the rest of the group, and Tunde followed. They said their little hellos and Rachel proceeded to introduce Tunde to them.

“Guys, meet ‘Tune-day’. Tune-day, meet Oliver, Aiden, and Chloe. Now that the introduction is out of the way, let’s get down to business. We have the Mythology section to ourselves. Scan through, grab a book, and see if we can get something interesting to work on,” Rachel said.

“Aye, Captain,” said Oliver, and the group got to work.

Aiden moved his hands across the dusty shelves, looking for a book with an interesting design. “Never judge a book by its cover my ass”, he said as he skipped books with plain covers. He kept going till something caught his attention; it was a book stuck between two shelves. It had a black and golden cover, and was a little bit dusty. He blew the dust off the book to reveal its title, and written in cursive was “Miss Koi”.

“Now, this is what I’m talking about,” said Aiden, and quitted his search for other materials.

He retired to an empty chair in the library to read a bit on his newly found treasure. He was only four pages in when others joined him. They all had their books but were also captivated by the one Aiden found.

“What do we have here?” Chloe asked.

“Yeah, one random story about Miss Koi. The author is unknown,” Aiden replied.

Tunde was surprised and hoped it was what he thought it was; he had always wanted to know more about Miss Koi Koi. He proceeded to ask Aiden what the book was all about.

“To be honest, it’s pure garbage. Interesting, yeah. But garbage. It’s more of a summoning rather than a story. The author kept leaving footnotes that something key was left out so someone won’t be stupid enough to try it out,” Aiden said, with his head still buried in the book.

“Yeah, but what is it about?” Chloe asked again.

“A story about a woman who does something horrible to anyone brave enough to summon her,” Tunde replied.

“Look at my boy go. How do you know about that?” Aiden asked.

“I’ve always heard the story as a kid back home. You’ve got to be alone dead in the night for the summoning to work.”

“Don’t tell me you believe this shit,” Oliver chipped in.

“I am unsure of what to believe. I mean, if one can believe in God, it’s only natural to believe there are other entities out there,” Tunde said.

“So, do you believe in God?” Oliver asked.

“Of course, I do.”

“Which means you also believe in this shit.”

“You know what? Fuck you!” Tunde could no longer contain his anger.

“Heeeey, watch it black boy,” Oliver blurted.

“Of course, this is what it is all about. The book is shit because it’s of African descent. You never called that Icarus story shit even when you know it is in fact, shit.”

“Africans and tagging everything to race. The Icarus or any other story is different because we do not believe it to be true,” Oliver scoffed.

“Okay guys, cut it out,” Rachel tried to calm both parties.

“You know what? I know what the missing key is. It’s not Miss Koi, but Miss Koi Koi. Feel free to call out her name whenever you’re alone tonight,” Tunde said.

The guys were still at it until the librarian asked them to leave because they were disturbing the peace of others. Rachel rescheduled their meeting for later that night and they all dispersed.

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Kevin was done with his research and was on his way back home when he saw Tunde exiting the library. He ran to catch up with him and could tell something was wrong. He treated Tunde to lunch and decided to ask what got him all riled up. Tunde told his part of his story and Kevin could do nothing but empathize with him. One could tell from the clattering of spoon on plate that the boys were about finishing their meals. Kevin reunited loose rice with his spoon and got ready to take a final scoop, he took a pause, then popped a question.

“You do not really believe it would work, do you?”

“We’d get to know tonight,” Tunde replied.

“You are finally going to try it out?”

“Hell no. If there is anything I know about the whites, it’s that they are stupid in different ways. I know Oliver will definitely try it out, and I really hope Miss Koi Koi turns out real.”

“You are really gonna enjoy it, won’t you?”

“Do I have to spell it out?”

Kevin had that uncontrollable laughter but was quick to comport himself as soon as the waiter approached them with the bill. He fumbled with his wallet before retrieving two twenty-dollar bills. The waiter grabbed the money and sent it into the pocket of his apron. The two boys then gulped on their drinks before heading for their respective homes.

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It was 23:50 and Oliver had left the group to take a leak; he whistled away as he emptied his bladder into the bowl. He found himself before a mirror just at the other side of the toilet and began stroking his hair backwards. He did it several times as if to make his reflection jealous. He was about to leave but then thought it was the perfect time to say the name since he was alone, and it was already late. He started by mouthing the name, unsure if he should really do it. But then, let his intrusive thought win.

“Miss Koi Koi.”

“Miss Koi Koi.”

He waited a bit for something to happen, but it did not.

“Hell, what was I expecting?” He said, and made his way back to the group.

The group was alerted by the scream that came from the direction of the toilet. They all stood up to check up on Oliver, but soon found him running towards them.

“I said her name,” he said gasping for breath.

“Whose name?” Rachel and Chloe asked in unison.

“Her name,” he repeated.

“Miss Koi?” Rachel asked again.

“Yeah, and guess what! It was shit after all,” Oliver said as he laughed hysterically.

“Dude, we came running to meet you,” said Chloe.

“Sorry, just wanted to—”

“What the fuck is that?”

Rachel asked pointing to the portal that appeared behind Oliver. Oliver did a slow turn to witness the figure making its way through the portal, face first. The figure didn’t deserve the ‘she’ pronoun as it turned out to be a hideous monster; although, with the features of a woman. Oliver’s heart raced, and his flight hormone kicked in. He pushed his way through the obstacles before him as he attempted to leave the building; the rest followed, while Tunde tried telling them they were safe.

“Relax guys, we should be alright, we didn’t say the name,” he said.

“RUN!!!” Aiden screamed.

Tunde was indecisive, not knowing whether to stay or not. It remained that way until the monster took its first swipe. Tunde’s reflex was quick; he weaved and staggered his way out of claw-like nails that ended up in the wall. He tripped and fell on his way to recovery, but was quick to skimp back to his feet. He ran out of the class and into the hallway where he saw Aiden holding open the exit door. He heard the creature screeching behind him and he increased his pace. Aiden bolted the door shut as soon as Tunde made it through. They both ran to regroup with the rest of their colleagues. Aiden saw Oliver panting and gasping for breath, but that didn’t stop him from hitting him with a straight punch. He attempted to throw a couple more, but the girls jumped between them to stop the assault.

“HE CAUSED IT, HE SAID ITS NAME, WE ARE SCREWED,” Aiden yelled.

“Was that Miss—”

“Don’t say that name,” Aiden was quick to cut Chloe short.

“Saying that name will lead that thing straight to us,” he continued.

“What do we do now?” Rachel asked.

“We are to survive the night, and in the history of summoning, no one has been able to pull that off. We are all going to die, thanks to this dimwit,” Aiden’s anger could be felt from a mile away.

“I do not understand, it should go only after the summoner,” said Tunde in disbelief.

“Well, that ain’t the case. According to the book, everyone present at the time it surfaced, becomes game for it to hunt.”

“But we should be safe, so long we do not call its name,” said Rachel.

“That’s the problem, we all saw the portal. It will locate us through our sight, we’ve got to be on the move.”

“You knew all that from a book you read today?” Oliver teased.

“You summoned it, that monster is drawn to you the most.”

Oliver’s forehead broke into sweat as his brain found it hard to possess that information. He tried to talk himself out of the fear he was in, but was interrupted by Miss Koi Koi’s screech. They all looked at one another before sprinting towards the school’s exit. The screech became louder, and the girls screamed in fear. They kept running and at the same time trying to devise a means for an escape.

“LET’S ALL SPLIT UP. IT WON’T BE ABLE TO GET TO US AT THE SAME TIME,” Oliver yelled.

“THE OUTCOME REMAINS THE SAME, WE WON’T MAKE IT,” Aiden replied.

“DID IT SAY WHEN THIS FIRST STARTED?” Rachel asked.

“NO! BUT IT DID SAY IT WAS A VERY, VERY, VERY, LONG TIME AGO,” Aiden replied.

“GOOD!” Rachel stopped to catch her breath and the others did the same. “Let’s order for a ride,” she continued.

“Are you up to something?” Aiden asked.

“I presume ‘very, very, very, long time ago’ was in the period where there was no car. It is possible it can outrun a person, but can it outrun a car? We just have to get a car and ride till daybreak.”

“Only we can’t order for a ride, it is fucking late,” Chloe cried out.

“We do not need to order,” Tunde said as he elbowed his way through the front door glass of a car parked just outside the school. He got into the driver’s seat and began to hotwire the car. He was at it when they heard the screech again; only this time, Miss Koi Koi was visible to the eyes. Tunde screamed for them to get in as soon as he got the engine running. Aiden got into the front seat; Rachel hurried into the back. Miss Koi Koi was gaining on them and Chloe was yet to get in the

car. Oliver dragged her to the floor and hopped in. Chloe tried to get back on her feet but was brought back down by the monster.

“GO, GO, GO,” Oliver screamed.

Tunde shifted the gearstick and drove off, while they left Chloe at the mercy of Miss Koi Koi; but of course, it showed none. It dug its 2-inch claws into her chest and ripped it open. She let out a sharp cry and hot tears escaped her eyes; it was a quick death. Her lifeless body watched as the monster clawed its way into her heart. It grabbed the heart and squeezed unpumped blood onto its face and into its mouth. It ran its tongue over its face and growled softly, as if to appreciate the taste of blood after being dormant for years.

“What the fuck did you do?” Rachel asked. She hit Oliver multiple times until he clamped both hands.

“I did what any normal person would do, chose my life over hers,” he said, unapologetically.

“You are a monster. You are the true monster here.” Rachel burst into tears.

Tunde and Aiden had been silent throughout the ride, they both watched Rachel cry from the rearview mirror. Oliver tapped on his kneecap, while the look on his face remained unremorseful. Tunde turned to Aiden who only nodded in return; a silent communication. Tunde drove for two hours before coming to a halt, he asked Aiden to take over the wheel, but Aiden claimed he couldn't drive. They both turned to Oliver who had seen through their plan.

“So, I step out of the car and you drive off? Not gonna happen. You keep driving or I call its name,” Oliver wore his meanest look.

They were defeated, and Tunde had no option than to step on the gas. He and Aiden locked eyes again, and another communication took place. They wore their seatbelts while Tunde drove the car at its top speed before stepping on the brake. Rachel and Oliver bumped their heads into the front seats; Rachel went out, while Oliver was still aware of his surroundings. Tunde and Aiden were quick to get out of the car. They dragged Oliver out and onto the floor.

“Go get ready,” Tunde said.

Aiden got back to the car and checked up on Rachel, she was still breathing, only unconscious. He then went to the driver's seat and placed both hands on the steering

“You know, I've been wanting to try this out since I was a kid, never really had the balls to,” Tunde said.

“We are both going to die if you do anything stupid,” Oliver replied weakly.

“How quick of you to be a believer.”

“Don't do this.”

“Miss Koi Koi.”

The portal appeared once more, and the monster wasted no time emerging. Tunde backed away slowly, got to the car, and Aiden drove away. Oliver managed to get on his feet and soon started to run; just what the monster wanted. It screeched, glared its serrated teeth, and went for the chase.

**END**