

*'It is with great regret that we...'*

*'Unfortunately, there are no longer any vacancies...'*

*'Your qualifications appear to be insufficient...'*

A sound leaves his throat, something between a cry of rage and a sob of pure anguish, as he deletes all seventeen rejection emails and resists the urge to throw his laptop out the window. He kicks a side stool instead, curses, picks it up and throws out the window. His neighbors will probably have words with him later, but he couldn't care less if he tried.

Kess paces his very small living room, hands tangling in and almost aggressively tugging at his locs. This is *insane*. It makes no sense.

"What the hell is going on?" he snarls, standing still.

The armchair and small flat-screen have no answers for him. He resumes pacing, only to stop and stare at his reflection in the television. Bloodshot eyes, rumpled shirt and crooked tie, messy hair and an angry twist to his lips.

He closes his eyes. Takes one breath, then another, opens his eyes and grins at his reflection.

"I'm gonna go get wasted," he says to the television.

There's no response, but he doesn't really expect one, retreating to his bedroom to shower and get changed.

Maybe plebeians went to drink away their sorrows wearing whatever, but Kessiena Jacobs would rather die than be caught unfresh.

The walk is an unpleasant reminder that he's had to sell his car to keep up with the ever expensive capital city of Abuja.

'Although,' he thinks, only a little bitter, twisting through the packed streets and avoiding contact as much as possible, 'It was papa's car anyway.'

Papa's old but well kept blue Ford. In another country, somewhere like England perhaps, he would've been able to sell it as a vintage piece, and probably be set for life.

This is Nigeria though, the people here are far too obtuse for such things. The money he'd made from it had barely been enough to last two months and even then the mechanic had been supremely sour about it.

Idly, he wonders what his parents think of him when they stare down from heaven.

Twenty seven, no girlfriend - or boyfriend, if he even swings that way. He's honestly not sure – no plans to get married, no friends, no job. This close to getting kicked out of his flat. A washed up artiste - and God, what was he thinking? So many hours, so much money wasted in studios and on albums that never sold – that gets dragged to perform at weddings when the actual musician they hired doesn't show, paid an amount that's shameful to even speak of.

'Yeah, my parents are probably rolling in their graves,' he thinks with a sardonic chuckle, bending down to step into the club after the bouncer waves him in. Being six foot seven has not done him any favors.

For a second, he just breathes, letting the music – *loudpiercingmakeitstop* – wash over him.

It's fine. This is all fine. He can soldier through the migraine. All he has to do is wade through the writhing - sorry, dancing - bodies on the cramped dance floor, snag himself some whiskey, then sit back and watch the people make fools of themselves. It's immensely satisfying.

Of course, halfway there, he catches sight of a woman being felt up clearly without her consent, if the angry expression and aborted attempts to knee her assailant in the groin are anything to go by.

With a sigh nobody else hears, he sidles up to the pair of them, carefully putting an arm around her shoulder and pitching his voice enough that the short bastard with an unkempt beard can hear him.

"Is there a reason you're touching my girl?"

He freezes, looking up... and up... until he sees Kess' face. Said man smiles at him, the same smile his Mama had called demonic on many occasions.

"I- she-!"

Kessiena flexes his hand once. He's never actually been in a fight before, but he's pretty sure he can take the rat if it comes down to it. He doesn't have to. The man takes one look at his hand, identifies it as the threat it most definitely is, turns around and disappears into the crowd.

He takes his hand off, already moving forward. He's fulfilled his quota of good deeds for the entire month, it's time to sin.

"Wait, excuse me-" The woman grabs the sleeve of his sweatshirt and his shoulders slump in resignation as he turns to face her. "I just wanted to thank you, " she says, looking sheepish.

He stares blankly, just now registering her appearance.

Light skinned, extra curly weave and a short silk dress with a high slit at the side. Smoky makeup, red lip gloss and bold lashes. If he's not mistaken, that's a Fairytale guild tattoo on her arm.

"A woman of culture, I see," he juts his chin at the tattoo, in lieu of answering her.

He doesn't need to be thanked, it wasn't out of his way. If he'd been across the club and they weren't blocking his path, he wouldn't have given a shit.

Unfortunately, he can't say that because she looks like the type to label him a rape apologist or something equally ridiculous and drag him all over Twitter NG for it. That's the last thing he needs.

She laughs, clearly caught off guard. "Uh, yeah. Can I buy you a drink?"

Kess eyes her, then shrugs, offering an arm to her so she doesn't get lost in the crowd. She's skinny and freaking short – then again, everyone is short compared to him – and he's definitely not about to pass up free drinks.

They finally reach the bar, and he helps her onto a bar stool, politely looking away and taking his own seat as she attempts to adjust her dress.

'Sis, I know you just tried to flash me. You have a nice pair of breasts but I don't give a shit,' is what he almost says, but he holds his tongue. Twitter NG will adjust the story as it suits their homophobic purposes. Not today, Satan.

He still doesn't pay her any attention, looking over the dance floor. There's two ladies fighting and pulling weaves on one end, that one couple off to the side that's probably having sex, that guy who looks way too young to be there and-

Isn't that pastor Ademolu?

He leans back, amused, and wonders if he should take a picture of the 'Holy' man.

A tap on his arm draws his attention away and he side eyes the woman. She's holding a glass of something that looks very, very expensive.

"I'm Kessiena," he almost shouts, accepting the glass.

She smiles, a pretty and seemingly demure thing, and shouts back, "Adeola."

They make a toast to something he really didn't care enough to recall, and he starts taking small sips, people watching once more.

The last thing he remembers is her self satisfied smile morphing into a look of pure terror as he pitches forward and collapses.

Dead. Kessiena Jacobs died on the 20th October, 2021 from a spiked drink offered to him by a woman he thought he'd helped out.

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Kessiena knows he's dead before he even fully registers it. Maybe it's the way his chest felt like it was burning the second the drink traveled down his throat. Maybe it's the way Adeola took off her shoes and started to race towards the exit.

Or, you know, maybe it's because he's standing over his body right now.

He squints, looking around the club and back down at himself. The music isn't half as loud now, it almost feels like he has cotton in his ears. He squats, reaching over to slap his own cheek. Nothing happens.

"I thought they said ghosts can't touch anything," he sniffs, unimpressed. "Abi it's because it's my body?"

He stands up to test his theory. There's a bartender weaving through the crowd, holding a tray of glasses up high.

Kessiena snatches one of the glasses. He can hold it. He eyes the liquid inside — pale pink, with ice cubes. He says a prayer, whether or not whoever is in Heaven will hear it, and downs the glass in one go.

There's no taste. He can feel his mouth moving as he chews the ice cubes, and vaguely notices as the drink somehow ends up on the floor, like it phased through his body.

"Can touch, can't taste, or drink," he notes, remarkably calm for someone who just died.

He watches as a crowd starts to gather around his body, and the music stops. The bright lights come on. The manager scurries in, clothes askew.

"What is this?!" He screams, short and angry as most men are. He stabs a finger in the bartender's direction. "What happened to him? I thought you people know CPR? That's why I hired you? Why are you looking?!"

"Sir," says a waiter, already crouched next to Kessiena's body. "He's... he's not breathing."

It's clear the exact moment when a chill passes through the Manager's body, although that may have been because Kessiena walked right through him to see if it was possible. Between one blink and the next, the angry, suit-wearing gnome faints.

Kessiena snorts out a laugh, leaning against the counter. "God this is funny."

The commotion gets even louder, and people try to leave. The bouncers aren't having it however. Not until their boss gives a direct order.

Everyone is pulling out their phones now, making videos and live streaming. Calling their loved ones who may or may not be able to help.

The latest ghost in town spots Adeola standing by the door to the restroom, a slightly smaller, dark skinned lady by her side. He wanders over to them.

"—do this all the time! This is why I don't follow your suggestions," Adeola hisses. She's trying to call someone. Kessiena leans over her shoulder and spies the name, 'Babycakes'. Babycakes isn't picking up. How tragic.

"Na you fuck up nau," the dark skinned friend scoffs. "Simple thing, spike the drink, take him somewhere private and dance for him a little, then steal his wallet and make him tell you his ATM pin." She looks too relaxed for the situation they're in.

"But I mixed it exactly as you said, ehn, Rafa," Adeola sounds distraught. "I even put less than the amount, just in case."

"Then why do I have three wallets on me, while you're the reason we can't leave?" Rafayat very nearly bites Adeola's nose off, with how close she gets. She flashes the wallets for a moment, before stashing them away somewhere in her velvet dress.

Kessiena is reluctantly impressed. He has to admit, it does take some amount of skill to manage spiking men's drinks and robbing them. Not too much, but just enough. After all, no man would expect it. Men don't fear women as much as they should. If he had exercised even a tiny bit of caution, he would still be alive right now.

He is also very amused. Adeola really looked him up and down and thought he had money? He should be flattered. The only thing she would've been able to get from three of his cards combined is two cups of garri and one smoked fish.

The manager doesn't seem to be waking up anytime soon, and the sounds of sirens can be heard outside. One of the club goers must have called someone in power then. Good for them.

Kessiena makes his way to the exit, and phases through the door. There's a crowd of people outside, but he doesn't care about them. His social battery has evaporated, and he just wants to go home and sleep. It's barely been two hours since he left.

Can ghosts sleep? Will he phase through the bed in the middle of an interesting dream? Do ghosts even dream?

Most importantly, can he still eat?

"So many questions," he sighs, kicking a rock off the pavement. "You're too calm for a dead man, Kess." It hasn't really sunk in yet, that he's no longer alive. Delayed reactions are fairly normal for him. Maybe he'll realize it in the morning.

Speaking of daylight, he checks his watch to see what time it is. The clock face reads '11:43' but that's impossible because he got to the club around 11 o'clock. Kess slows to a stop, glaring at the watch until he realizes the answer.

The clock stopped when he died. The physical one on his body might still be working, but this one? It's gone. A chill seeps into his bones.

"Dead men tell no tales," he whispers. "I bet it's because they can't tell time."

It's a bad joke, and even he doesn't laugh. He continues walking, gaze unfocused. It doesn't matter who or what he bumps into. It's not like he can feel pain anymore.

He checks his watch again out of habit when he finally makes it home. It's still 11:43.

His keys aren't on him. He walks through his front door with ease, and immediately falls on the floor.

The tiles should be cold. He can't feel them. His head should hurt from the fall. He can't feel that, either. He should be sweaty and tired from such a long walk. He can't feel anything.

Kessiena closes his eyes, and hopes he doesn't wake up again.

When has he ever been lucky?