

The bus came too close to Kaine. Even with the heat of the day, she was surprised by the heat coming from the front of the bus, against her face, as it drove past her into the open road.

It was worrying and impressive that the bus driver was driving at such speed with the car park filled with pedestrians and other vehicles.

Maloko car-park that Mummy Victory had described to her was also a fueling station, Kaine wondered how they went around their business with the congestion at both entrances of the station.

Kaine moved a little more to her left from where she had been standing, beside an okada waiting for the rider to return with her change. Three other riders had stopped to 'take her to where she was going'. Since she ignored the third rider, none had stopped by her in a while.

"Sisi, abeg no vex oh."

Kaine turned to the man; He held two sachets of dry gin in one of his hands, and the other hand was stretched towards her. She put her hand forward and took her change.

"No, worry Oga." The okada rider smiled at her reply and made a quick tear with his mouth on the sachet of gin in his hand.

"I never chop since morning, I just say make I put this one for belle." The rider had already mounted his okada, and was sucking on the sachet of gin.

Kaine nodded as he drove away... then shook her head gently.

"With his white hair you think he would at least know what's right." She murmured to herself. Kaine shook her head harder, another story to tell Jimmy about her journey while serving her country.

The rider's breath had been smelling of gin he had been drinking before he returned with her change, she had smelt it immediately he spoke; and he was holding two more sachets. At a few minutes past 12?

She felt someone pull her jacket from behind, Kaine turned to see a woman holding her jacket in one hand, then a baby across her chest with the other hand holding the child in place.

There was a little girl just behind the woman holding a baby bag; with a large part of the shawl hanging out like it had been stuffed into the bag.

"Auntie... Please, God go bless you" The woman took the hand off Kaine's jacket, and pointed at her mouth before grabbing the jacket again before Kaine moved.

"Abeg no vex, I no get too much cash with me right now and I'm still going somewhere really far from here." This made the woman pull the jacket more.

"Please leave me alone, what's this embarrassment for? Do you know me? Even if you do, it's me who will decide to give you or not?"

The woman stared open mouth at Kaine. She looked like she was slapped. Kaine herself was surprised she had been that loud, she just hadn't wanted the woman to cause a scene by kneeling. She could see other pedestrians watching them now and Kaine felt her anger rise.

The woman must have felt it too cause she left the jacket and walked away. The girl walked slowly dragging the baby bag like Kaine was a masquerade that had to be watched carefully when walking past. Kaine watched her walk to meet the woman, and could only blink when the woman slapped the girl's back hard enough to make her stumble.

The girl stumbled forward before she shifted to the left to avoid the second slap that would have connected to her face. Kaine paused but no one else seemed to care enough to do anything when Kaine's eyes went around.

Her eyes went back to the girl again, with her eyes meeting Kaine with innocent judgment;

"JUST 200 NAIRA WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO PREVENT THIS... WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST GIVE THEM 200 NAIRA ,AUNTY?"

Kaine looked away and began to walk to the other entrance at the end of the fueling station; she became even more annoyed with herself for doing so. It wasn't her fault the woman was a child abuser who could not provide for herself and the girl.

Yet she was having another baby to care for? Is she stupid or she just doesn't care about her situation?

"Sisi why you dey vex, come make I carry you go where you wan go now." The Okada rider revved the engine; Kaine wasn't sure if he did so to impress her into choosing him or to just get her attention -Still, it made Kaine realize she was squeezing her eyebrows together.

She shook her head and released her eyebrows, and focused on putting one leg before the other as she entered the shed over the various fueling points.

"YOU CAN STILL GIVE THEM THE MONEY, JUST TURN AND LOOK FOR THEM."

Kaine laughed once,

"So, what will I say? Sorry for not giving you money, I didn't know it would make you hit the girl?"

"IF YOU HAD JUST GIVEN HER THE MONEY THEN YOU WOULDN'T BE THINKING OF WHAT TO SAY NOW"

"I don't even need to say anything, I will just go back and give them the money. Whether they collect it or not is her problem."

The okada rider across Kaine backpedaled, dragging his okada with him. She met his eyes but he dragged his away and positioned himself in a way that would be easier for him to ride quickly. It wasn't the first time she had been watched warily for talking to herself out loud.

Kaine hissed at the rider but couldn't direct her anger at him. She took her eyes from him, looking back into the heat outside the cover of the shed for the girl and the woman. She didn't see either of them.

"YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE THEM?!"

"Tch... I'll find them." Kaine walked back out of the cover and felt her eyebrows squeeze together again. She didn't bother trying to relax them. The heat, and the inconvenience of everything was getting to her.

"Sisi.. cold mineral. Malt, bottle water." Two drink hawkers moved quickly towards Kaine, that she had to step back. The smell of sweat still filled her nose.

Kaine picked one bottle of water from the basket of the farthest woman and pulled herself away from the other.

“Sisi mi. Thank you.” The hawker collected the money from her and loosened the change from the cloth tied to her waist in what looked like one motion.

“Mama, What about that woman wey dey carry baby... wey get one small girl pikin like that too ” Kaine congratulated herself internally for not stuttering at any point.

“Iya Ezabella?” The woman asked her eyes on the hand trying to sort out the bundle in her wrapper to pull out change.

“SO, THE GIRL’S NAME IS ISABELLA”

Kaine nodded, as she received the change to confirm the money and the person she was asking of -even though she wasn’t completely sure.

The hawker turned sharply to both ends of the station,

“Iya Ezabella. She just left.” Kaine waited for her to say more and the hawker continued pointing beyond the entrance of the fueling station Kaine had entered through, “She go come back, in like one hour. She don go do her work for the bus stop for that other side.” Then she left and ran to a man close by who was already faced with two other hawkers.

Kaine shook her head gently, she wasn’t going to wait an hour for the woman.

She looked at the entrance which the hawker had pointed to and saw people running. A man fell just before he crossed the gutter at the front of the fueling station and landed with his neck on the edge with the rest of his body falling into the gutter.

A woman screamed and Kaine turned. It was then she noticed that most of the okada riders were riding away and people were running. Kaine followed for a few steps.

“WAIT, WON’T YOU FIND OUT WHAT IS GOING ON FIRST BEFORE YOU START RUNNING LIKE AN ILLITERATE? Kaine”

She turned to face the entrance of the fueling station; most of the people who had been there were halfway through the fueling station and a second wave was running in. One of the runners fell and didn’t have the chance to get up.

“DO SOMETHING Kaine, ARE YOU JUST GOING TO WATCH ANOTHER PERSON DIE?”

“Let me drop my bag somewhere first” She whispered, the initial panic in her had reduced now.

“Kaine, YOU WANT TO DROP YOUR BAG FIRST? WHEN SOMEONE IS BEING STAMPEDE TO DEATH? YOUR BAG IS YOUR FIRST PRIORITY?”

Kaine didn’t bother explaining that if she lost her bag she would be stranded; she ran to one of the stalls that sold gin by the side of the fueling station.

She found a high stool that had been pushed down and dropped her bag between the legs before placing her jacket over it.

Kaine looked around to see if anyone had been watching her; Most of the people were now at the opposite end of the fueling station watching those who were still close to the other entrance, but she didn’t see anyone looking in her direction.

“THAT DOESN’T MEAN NOBODY SAW YOU.”

“I’ll help him quickly and come back for it.” Kaine hissed back and made her way to the man on the floor. There were more than five people on the floor there now.

“LET US HELP THOSE PEOPLE, HELP THEM!!” Kaine shouted as she made her way to them.

She saw a few people look at her and others give way for her to pass. Kaine sent a thankful prayer when she saw a few men ahead go forward to help those on the floor.

The gap between those on the floor at the entrance and those watching was slowly getting filled with people.

“Why are you running?” One of the women asked another standing beside her, Kaine slowed down to listen.

“I don’t know, I saw people running ni and I ran too.” The woman turned around to see if there was anyone she could ask herself.

“CAN YOU SEE THE PEOPLE YOU WERE RUNNING WITH Kaine?”

“But nobody will run if there was no danger”

“...Thank you sisi” The woman responded with the assurance of someone justified. Kaine hadn’t known she had spoken out loud; she kept moving towards the people on the floor. Each one now had at least two people around them, apart from the man she had seen fall initially.

There was no one around him; even his blood seemed like it wanted to avoid all association with the man as it flowed out.

“A MAN WAS DYING AND YOUR BIGGEST WORRY IN HIS FINAL MOMENTS WAS THE SAFETY OF YOUR BAG? WELL DONE Kaine, AS EXPECTED.”

Kaine wanted to scream. How many seconds had she taken to hide her bag, would she have been able to prevent this man’s head from spilling its content within that time?

Some of the victims were still conscious and were crying out, one woman whose bone had broken through her skin at her leg, was telling whoever listened that her husband had told her not to go to the market today.

Kaine moved forward as she remembered the person who had fallen into the gutter at the entrance of the fueling station.

Three men were already there, with two of them trying to pull him out of the gutter; but the way his body dangled from their hands looked discouraging.

“DON’T TURN BACK? STILL GO AND SUPPORT THEM, Kaine WITH YOUR WORDS AND PRESENCE..”

Kaine moved towards the men at the entrance and froze when she saw a fourth man coming from the direction people had been running from, hit one of the three men; the remaining two stumbled from the extra weight as the man who had been hit fell into them.

Kaine felt her hands go cold and her heart jump.

She saw a fifth man and probably up to a ninth making their way to those who were close to the entrance; with the other two men who had gone to help the man in the gutter laying with their upper bodies in blood -one attacker was still hacking at the body of the first man.

Kaine felt people start to run around her, onlookers running away, attackers running towards them, nobody moved to Kaine; no onlooker pushing her away in their panic to get away or attacker running towards her -Kaine would have believed she was invisible, if not for the man that had stopped hacking and was running at her now.

"RUN AND GET YOUR BAG KATIE SO AT LEAST YOU WON'T BE STRANDED"

Katie turned and ran to the other end of the fuelling station.

"REMEMBER, THE BAG IS BENEATH THAT YOUR JACKET THERE BY THE RIGHT JUST GO TO IT"

Katie ran past the jacket.

Katie had passed three people when she noticed that the people at the other end were running towards her at the fueling points.

"WHY ARE THEY RUNNING BACK TO THE ENTRANCE?"

Katie didn't bother asking, turned to look around, and saw the attackers behind were no longer running with some stopping to hack at the bodies on the floor.

"They are everywhere ooh, Jehovah..." a woman shouted

"At that side too?"

"Dem no plenty like that for front..."

"Woah... just run oh" another man suggested

"Ah...My child is still in school, please oh!"

"KATIE! RUN WITH THE CROWD AND TRY TO SLIP BETWEEN THEM AND THE ATTACKERS..."

Katie ran to the left; weaving through people and away from those moving forward. She saw a people running ahead in the same direction some of the younger boys were scaling a fence during the initial chaos.

That was her next destination.

A woman running to the entrance slowed right in front of Katie to turn, and they collided. Katie slowed, but the woman fell.

"Ehhhh... Wait for me, please no leave me for here."

"KATIE! GO AND HELP THIS WOMAN, YOU WERE THE ONE WHO PUSHED HER DOWN IN THE FIRST PLACE."

Katie looked back, and saw that people were running towards the fence including the attackers. She turned forward and ran harder.

The fence was getting closer and looking bigger, a few people had gotten over the wall and were trying to help those who couldn't scale it by themselves.

Katie ran straight into the crowd, pushing forward. Katie looked around; People shouting, fighting, and people being pulled up the fence -Katie pushed in that direction.

"THIS IS A MESS"

A woman whose wig was halfway off elbowed Katie in the rib twice as she tried to get ahead of her.

Katie replied with her elbow to the woman's head then pushed forward again.

The men on the fence were pulling people to the top of the fence.

One man on the fence pulled the hands stretched towards them to the edge of the wall, and another man pulled the people who had hands on the fence up the fence.

Katie stopped trying to get in front of the woman and just flowed with the crowd's push at the fence.

As they pushed her closer to the fence -Kaine used her strength and pushed the woman hard against bodies directly against the wall.

“Ah... Stop pushing me you witch.”

Kaine felt the woman’s nails scratch the skin on her forearm; Kaine kept pushing the woman till she was bent halfway, then she lept on her back.

“KAINE! DO YOU WANT TO KILL THIS WOMAN?”

“You know what I want to do,” Kaine whispered to herself.

Kaine stretched her hands to the top of the fence. Before the woman beneath her collapsed she got pulled to the top of the fence.