

On that chilly Monday morning, the kind that tempts you to stay in bed all day, Stan found himself reluctant to rise. The persistent cold snap had lingered for days now, casting a gloomy shadow over his usually vibrant campus life. It was well past 9 a.m., and he had already missed the first lecture of the day. But fate had other plans for him.

A persistent knock echoed through his dorm room, disrupting the solitude he had sought. "Stan... Open the door, man," came the voice of Dimeji, his friend and course mate. Dimeji had noticed Stan's absence in the morning class and decided to check on him. They had an important test scheduled for 11 a.m., and Dimeji observed that Stan had been isolating himself since last week.

With a sigh, Stan roused himself from his cocoon of blankets and shuffled to the door. He knew he couldn't avoid Dimeji's concern any longer. As he opened the door, Dimeji entered, wearing an expression that was a mix of annoyance and worry. "Why you no show for class? Wetin dey happen?" Dimeji inquired.

Stan replied with a heavy heart, "Honestly, that class doesn't interest me anymore. Nothing seems to bring me joy these days." His despair was palpable as he continued, "Dimeji, you know how much I cared about Dolapo. I gave her my all, never once thought of cheating. And what did I get in return? A breakup text, saying I'm too good. I just can't figure out what women want... This really hurts."

Dimeji, well aware of Stan's deep feelings for Dolapo, couldn't help but feel sympathy. However, he knew he needed to be firm. "You're still hung up on Dolapo? Come on, man, you deserve better. She wasn't right for you. All she wanted was to party and hit the clubs. You can't be someone you're not. It's time to move on for your own sake, Stan."

After a few more minutes of conversation, Dimeji managed to convince Stan to attend the upcoming test. "That lecturer didn't even cover the topic he tested us on," Mike chimed in with a grumble, breaking the tension. Mike was known for his lackadaisical approach to studies.

As they walked together, Stan, Mike, and Dimeji, students in the Mathematics and Statistics department at the University of Lagos, shared a common bond of friendship. Dimeji was the conscientious one, always pushing them to attend classes and complete assignments. Stan, the most academically gifted, often took a more relaxed approach, while Mike... well, Mike was Mike, perpetually unprepared and ready with an excuse.

Their destination was the familiar Big Mac, a popular fast-food joint on campus. However, as they approached, they spotted Dolapo and Kevin, deeply engrossed in each other's company.

Mike was the first to notice, and he couldn't resist blurting out, "Stan, isn't that Dolapo? Why is she all cozy with Kevin?" Unbeknownst to Mike, Stan and Dimeji had kept him in the dark about the breakup to avoid drama.

Stan's face fell, and he began to turn away when Dimeji grabbed his shoulder, urging him to stay. "Just because Dolapo's here doesn't mean you can't eat. And if she's in class, it doesn't mean you can't attend lectures. She's moved on; it's time for you to do the same. It's not the end of the world."

At that moment, Dolapo and Kevin approached. "Hi, Stan darling," Dolapo said, her voice laced with casual indifference. "How have you been?"

Stan fought to maintain his composure, suppressing his inner desire to create a scene. In a tone of indifference, he replied, "I've been good. I see you're fine." Dolapo responded with a smirk, her words dripping with meaning, "Oh, I'm fine," she said, her

gaze fixed on Kevin, who stood beside her. It was clear she meant "fine" in more ways than one – fine in appearance, as she was renowned as one of the most beautiful girls in their faculty, and fine in her newfound happiness with Kevin. Stan, who knew Dolapo all too well, understood the message crystal clear. He forced a smile and, with his friends, made their way into the restaurant.

As they waited their turn to place their order, Stan stood there, visibly irritated, his emotions on the brink. Dimeji, sensing his friend's turmoil, moved closer to him. In an effort to offer both comfort and a gentle nudge not to let his emotions overwhelm him, he said, "Bro, you're a real G, you know. No need to dwell on this." Stan simply nodded, attempting to shake off the events of a few minutes ago.

Weeks had passed since that test day and the restaurant encounter, yet Stan remained profoundly affected by the breakup. He found it increasingly difficult to concentrate in class, especially when he spotted Dolapo with Kevin. What made the situation even more painful was not just the breakup itself but also who Dolapo had chosen as her new partner.

Stan and Kevin had always maintained a rivalry, a friendly competition that ran deep. Both were considered among the brightest minds in the department, if not the entire faculty of applied sciences. They excelled in sports too, with Stan as the captain of the faculty's football team and Kevin the star of the school's basketball team. They were both First Class candidates, and their rivalry was well-known.

Kevin, the extrovert, was popular and had friends everywhere. Stan, equally gifted in looks, intelligence, and physique, was more reserved, the kind of guy you'd introduce to your parents. Both were thriving in their own unique ways but remained in constant competition.

So it was even more painful for Stan that Dolapo had chosen to date Kevin, fully aware of the rivalry. It added salt to the wound. Stan's constant absence from lectures and his inability to focus on his studies without drifting into thoughts of Dolapo and Kevin's relationship became a glaring issue.

It felt as if Dolapo and Kevin were deliberately trying to stoke his jealousy. They openly indulged in public displays of affection, especially when Stan was nearby. This tormented Stan, who would either abruptly leave the classroom or struggle to divert his attention elsewhere. His mind, despite his best efforts, couldn't help but be drawn to them time and time again.

As the exams drew nearer, Stan found himself woefully unprepared. His friends, especially Dimeji, were growing increasingly concerned. Dimeji had made several attempts to talk to Stan about his studies, but as the exams approached, Stan began to withdraw into a shell of gloom. Dimeji decided to give him some space, believing that Stan's impressive GPA could withstand a hit this semester, especially since they would be heading for internships next semester. Meanwhile, Dimeji needed to maintain his own CGPA to stay on track for his coveted 2.1.

Stan's phone rang, and as he picked it up to answer the call, he saw that it was Tamara calling. He sighed, knowing all too well why Tamara was calling. It had become a custom for her to reach out to him when exams were looming, seeking his guidance. Previous attempts to encourage her to study diligently from the start of the semester had failed, so Stan reluctantly answered the call.

"Hi, Tammy, how's it going?" Stan greeted her. Tamara responded with her usual playful tone, "Hello, Stanley, you've forgotten your girl. Not cool, you know." Tamara was the

only one who called him Stanley, despite Stan's initial efforts to correct her when they first became close after their first-semester results in their first year. Tamara was stubborn, but her company was always enjoyable, so Stan eventually let go of his insistence on being called Stan.

"I can never forget you, even if I tried," Stan replied. He was known for being straightforward, a trait Tamara had come to accept, perhaps even endure, in exchange for his tutoring.

"Stanley, you know exams are just two weeks away, right? I'm not ready at all. Plus, I haven't seen you in class these past weeks, which is quite unusual. Are you okay?" Tamara inquired.

"I'm fine," Stan replied, his voice hushed, as if he was uncertain of his own words. Tamara noticed the change in his tone but decided to probe further when they met in person. She had already heard about the breakup with Dolapo, whom she never really liked due to what she perceived as a stuck-up attitude.

"Will you come to the night class today? I really need your help with understanding Professor Ejiro's course – Mathematical Methods 2. It seems to get harder the more I try to study it. Please," Tamara pleaded.

Stan suddenly realized that he hadn't studied that course himself and, to be honest, hadn't truly studied any course since the breakup. He made a decision and said, "No problem. I'll see you in class at 10 PM, Faculty Hall."

"That's a date," Tamara replied with a chuckle before ending the call. She was determined to talk to him about what might be bothering him when they met in class later that night.

Getting ready for the night class proved to be a struggle for Stan. If he hadn't given his word to Tamara, he likely wouldn't have bothered attending. Frankly, he had lost interest in studying, and at this point, very few things piqued his interest anymore. The clock was inching toward 11 PM, and Stan was still not in class. Tamara had called earlier, and he had assured her he was on his way. She didn't want to appear as if she was pestering him, but as she attempted to study, her frustration grew. She wasn't sure if the course was unusually difficult or if it was her concern for Stan that was gnawing at her. Regardless, she decided to give him until 11 PM before calling again.

Just minutes before 11, Stan finally walked into the classroom. Tamara let out an audible sigh that drew the attention of those nearby.

"You sure took your time, Stanley. You're becoming a celebrity, huh?" Tamara teased, trying to lighten the mood. "I'm sorry... I got caught up with something and lost track of time," Stan explained. "How's your studying going? What have you covered?" he asked. Tamara replied with frustration, "Honestly, it feels like I haven't even opened my book. I'm as clueless as when I started."

Stan chuckled, a sound that had been absent from his life for too long. He thought to himself, "I've been living a sad life."

They began studying together, and while Stan struggled initially, he soon got into the groove of it. By 4 AM, they had covered a lot of ground, and Stan felt a sense of relief. He was genuinely happy that he had come out, as he had missed the feeling of studying.

"Tammy, let's call it a night. We'll continue later tonight; I'm already feeling sleepy," Stan suggested. "Pack up so I can walk you back to your lodge." Tamara agreed, relieved that

she could finally head home. She also saw this as an opportunity to have a conversation with Stan about his recent absence and lack of seriousness with his studies.

As they walked for about five minutes, Tamara decided it was time to broach the subject. "This may not be my business, but you're a close friend, and I really want to know what's been bothering you. I noticed you had trouble tutoring me earlier, which is something I've never seen since I've known you. Is it because of the breakup? You can talk to me, you know.

For some reasons, Stan found himself comfortable being vulnerable around Tamara. They had a heartfelt conversation, and before long, they stood in front of Tamara's lodge, exchanging goodbyes with hopes of meeting in class later that day.

Stan and Tamara had become inseparable. While it initially began during the exam period when they studied together, something had changed. Stan felt a growing desire to confide in Tamara. They talked on the phone, conversed whenever they could in class, and spent late nights studying together.

As the semester came to a close, Stan noticed a shift in his feelings. He felt less sadness when he saw Dolapo with Kevin. To their credit, she appeared happier with her new partner than she ever had with him. Initially, this stung, but with time, he found solace in her happiness. There was a silver lining: he was moving on, and his friendship with Tamara seemed to be blossoming.

As the holidays rolled in, Stan and Tamara found themselves spending more time together than they had initially anticipated. They both secured industrial training placements at companies within close proximity, a stroke of luck that allowed them to occasionally meet for lunch or coffee during their breaks. It was during these casual outings that their friendship began to morph into something deeper.

Their conversations gradually shifted from academic matters to personal ones. They found themselves talking about their dreams, fears, and aspirations. Stan was amazed by Tamara's intelligence, determination, and the kindness she showed to everyone around her. It wasn't long before he realized that his feelings for her were more than just friendly.

One sunny afternoon, as they sat at their favourite café, sipping on iced lattes, Stan decided to broach the subject that had been on his mind for a while. He cleared his throat and looked into Tamara's warm eyes.

"Tammy," he began, "there's something I've been wanting to talk to you about."

Tamara smiled; her curiosity piqued. "What is it, Stan?"

He took a deep breath. "I think we've grown closer over the holidays, and I've come to realize that my feelings for you have deepened. I don't just see you as a friend anymore, Tammy. I... I think I've fallen for you."

Tamara's eyes widened, and her lips curled into a surprised but radiant smile. "Stan, I've been feeling the same way. I care about you a lot, and I've been hoping you'd say something."

Relief washed over Stan's face as they shared a moment of profound connection. From that day forward, their relationship blossomed into a beautiful romance. They spent their free time exploring new places, sharing dreams, and building a bond that felt unbreakable.

One evening, as Stan and Tamara went for a walk he couldn't help but feel grateful for the twists and turns life had taken him through. Tamara was the shining star in his life, bringing light to the darkness he had experienced after the breakup with Dolapo.

In the background of their love story, Dimeji played a supportive role. He had always considered Tamara a fine babe, and when he saw the happiness she brought to Stan's life, he wholeheartedly approved of their relationship. He often teased Stan about being the luckiest guy on campus.

Mike, on the other hand, faced a different fate. He had failed to secure an industrial training placement and had to stay back to retake some exams. It was a challenging period for him, but Stan and Dimeji did their best to support their friend, offering study sessions and encouragement whenever needed. Mike, for the first time, realized the importance of taking his studies seriously.

The new semester arrived, and they found themselves in their final year of university. Stan and Tamara's relationship had deepened even further, and they faced the future together with optimism. They both had bright career prospects ahead and dreams they were determined to chase.

Dolapo and Kevin were still going strong in their relationship, and Stan couldn't help but smile when he saw them together. Time had healed the wounds of his past, and he genuinely wished them happiness. It was a testament to his growth and newfound contentment.

Everyone seemed to be in a good place. Stan had learned valuable life lessons about resilience, friendship, and the unpredictability of love. As they embarked on their final year, they were filled with hope, excitement, and the knowledge that they had each other's backs.

The university had been a place of trials and tribulations, but it had also been a place where enduring friendships were forged, and love unexpectedly bloomed. Stan's heart was full, and he couldn't wait to see what the future held for him and the people he cared about. After all, they were all heading toward a brighter tomorrow, ready to conquer the world with the lessons they had learned and the bonds they had formed.