

HER PLAN

Jenny didn't grow up rich, she didn't grow up poor either, no! Jenny was somewhat in the middle, and being in the middle meant never being satisfied. In a race, the first-place winner is extremely excited about being an overall conqueror, the second runner-up is extremely happy for making it into the top three, but the first runner-up, that middle guy, yeah, he might be excited, but he'd probably feel a bit of misery, thinking what he could have done more to come in first place.

Besides, whoever liked coming in as second best?

Definitely, Jenny felt misery. She couldn't complain of lack because she was able to afford the basic necessities some people couldn't ever dream of having, yet, she couldn't brag because she couldn't afford the luxurious lifestyle she envied of the rich, and not just the rich, the filthy rich.

At 21, she felt she was running out of time and was still in some kind of rat race she created in her mind. She constantly pressured herself to live the life she envied and eventually lived discontented with whatever she had at present. "It isn't just about the money or my desire to become rich, it's also the people I let around me. If I want to be rich, I need to surround myself with the rich." Jenny thought.

Her mother had had enough and ever wondered where she went wrong in bringing up Jenny. How had her beautiful daughter become a discontent; greed-filled money seeker? Jenny argued every day with her own mother, a woman who sacrificed so much for Jenny to have the things she didn't have as a child. A woman who carried her for nine months in her womb? Just how did Jenny even come to detest her and not want to see her anymore? Jenny left home 8 months ago and she hated to think of what could've happened to her daughter in this cruel world.

On the other hand, Jenny had woken up that fine morning determined to escape her fictitious rat race and get herself into the filthy rich leagues. She was a graduate fresh out of university where she had earned her BEng in Civil Engineering with honours. What an irony. Top student her entire life and she could not boast of a measly million per month in earnings. Education was a joke, another reason she loathed her mother.

Jenny's mother had told her education was everything, she only needed to study hard and she would have scholarships, jobs, and eventually money fall into her lap. Jenny found out that wasn't true for her in a very hard way. Maybe in the days when her mother was a young girl, it

would have been possible. White countries seemed to have been sorting out the young and intelligent Africans in those days, scholarships were scarce and considered a golden opportunity to leave the country and give your parents the bragging rights of having a child studying abroad. Nowadays, you could score a whopping 25 points over 25 points at the GCE Advanced Levels at the age of 16 and still have nowhere promising to go if you can't afford it. This was Jenny's plight.

How could the world be so unfair? Jenny was book-smart. She hated that if she were to be identified at any point in time, she would either be identified as the beautiful fair-skinned girl or the intelligent girl who didn't have to try. Civil engineering wasn't a field for everyone, especially women, yet Jenny prevailed and excelled regardless. What next? No more school, she didn't want to continue the little businesses that helped her put herself through school. She wanted to be in the big leagues, civil engineering was indeed a lucrative field with lots of money, but how could she get those opportunities? How could she begin touching money so she could buy all the human hair wigs and high-heeled shoes she had screenshotted on her old iPhone 7+? Ha! She almost sold her soul for that phone some time ago, but now, with the coming of the iPhone 15 and her phone screen being shattered in more ways than twenty, she really detested showing up to public spaces with such a contraption as it was a loud and glaring indication of her social status, a horror for her.

Jenny needed a job; she had hopelessly followed the various "how to be a millionaire in 5 steps" tips she managed to see through her broken phone screen on TikTok. She had just of late realized those tips wouldn't help her probably due to her little money being swindled for so-called private classes on how to become a millionaire. It is after all true that man is greedy, and if one knew exactly how to become a millionaire, why would they want to share that information with thousands of other people? Also, she had learned that if someone didn't operate in billions, they couldn't advise on how to make millions.

But she couldn't help but fall for those little scammers on the internet. Especially the Nigerians, their luxurious lifestyles on TikTok and Instagram played a large role in the fantasy world Jenny imagined for herself. The hair influencers knew just exactly how to grab her attention as she was a diehard fan of luxury hair. Jenny's hair was beautiful, long, and shiny black. Many times, her acquaintances had openly envied her hair and how it complimented her fair skin. About her skin,

she had jokingly been told that even when electricity had been cut and everyone left in darkness, she was the only one who could be seen due to the brightness of her skin. She looked more Nigerian than she was Cameroonian, and it didn't help that she didn't speak pidgin at any instance and for the life of her, her brain couldn't seem to want to let her speak French or her mother tongue. She had tried everything possible to learn the languages but they just couldn't stick in her brain. This was another reason she was often assumed an '*ajebo*' or a 'rich kid' and she couldn't help but play into that fantasy.

Anyway, enough of all the thoughts for now, Jenny had to come up with a plan and quickly. Her high school would have a reunion next year, marking 5 years since they left the upper sixth class, she needed to show up in style, class, and with a good backstory. A fiancée wouldn't hurt. Her classmates who were the real '*ajebos*' back in the day were engaged, driving cars and traveling on vacations every weekend. Why couldn't it be her? She was the top student for crying out loud. After all the thinking, she had come up with a suitable plan that she thought would catapult her into the glory of riches.

Her plan would commence today. She would associate herself with the rich and wealthy of the town of Bamenda, which ought to give her connections. After that, she would be connected to the rich and wealthy of Yaoundé, where the real money flows. Then, she would have plan A and plan B. Plan A would be seducing a really rich man into marriage, he could be the age of her grandfather and she would care less. It had already been popularly referred to as the 'Regina Daniels way'. If that failed, she would go with plan B, which involved garnering enough information to blackmail the rich and yet have enough backing to stay alive. She was well aware being rich came with a short life span unless you were backed by a supreme authority, like a mighty Man of God, which is why she ensured that when she got rich, she would look for a great church to invest in to ensure she was always prayed for.

It wasn't like she didn't believe in God. Her father was a pastor, she grew up in the church, and she had known God since she was in diapers. Her first word was 'Amen'. The problem wasn't her lack of knowledge, it was her lack of patience. She had waited on God long enough. When was he going to remember her? She wasn't a sinner; she was a virgin and she did her best to not tell lies. She did find it hard to study her Bible daily and pray, but God knew her heart for sure. Sure, her plan seemed to be out of God's plan for her, but all roads led to Rome, right? She was a

hundred percent sure of God's plan for her life, she was a very rich woman. The Bible did say "...*the Kingdom of God suffereth violence and the violent taketh it by force...*", and as an avid follower of Christ, it meant 'either getting rich or die trying' or as some would say '*by hook or by crook*'.

She had a meeting scheduled at the Regional Delegation of Public Works Bamenda with the department in charge of public contracts. She had been linked up by her former classmate from the university. That was just the first step. After this meeting, she would work her way up. She took her time getting ready for the day this morning. She put on her most expensive wig costing 20,000 FCFA. It was a good fake. She had spritzed on a lot of her perfume; it was expensive as well and she needed to smell expensive. She still hadn't overcome a past stigma where she'd worn a perfume costing 500 FCFA because every rich person she knew wore perfume. Just as she entered the car having a group of friends who were to go out with her that day, the driver happened to hold back a cough and ask, "Who wore that cheap perfume?" she had felt so embarrassed and almost shrunk in her seat. She swore to never use cheap perfumes again.

Back to the present, she had managed to hail a motorbike to her meeting place at a bargained price of 250 FCFA from her home at Commercial Avenue. It must be a good day ahead as she almost always cheated when it came to transport fare. She can't even remember the number of chauffeurs she had cursed because of a hundred francs and sometimes because of fifty francs. Ah! She couldn't wait to put this poor life behind her.

Once she arrived at her destination, she met her classmate waiting just as he had told her over the phone before she began her journey.

"Ngwa, you're late *oh*." He said to Jenny after they exchanged a brief hug.

Jenny hated being referred to by her native name, but she couldn't be irked right now, as he somehow held the key to her wealthy life.

"I'm sorry, electricity cut off just as I was about to straighten my hair." She replied.

"No problem, let's get inside. I have a whole team ready to meet you. I told them you were the smartest student in our class."

Jenny smiled, "Thank you so much, Che. I have a favour to ask of you before we go inside though."

Che laughed, "Again Ngwa? What is it this time?":

"When we are inside, can you please refer to me as Jenny instead of Ngwa? I don't want them to begin placing labels on me because of my tribe."

"Hah! Ngwa Jennifer, this fine Bafut girl, what do you think they can say? Abeg, don't worry about that."

Her hope deflated. That wasn't the response she was expecting. Worst of all, after he finished talking, and held her in a half embrace and began leading her into the office building.

The building was run down, for a section responsible for public civil contracts, the building's interior and exterior were below par. In times like this, Jenny transported her mind to a land where she lived in nothing but luxury and was surrounded by money, her body was then left on autopilot.

People always said money wasn't everything but to Jenny, money was everything. They said money couldn't buy happiness but it could buy vacations, thrills, and adventure. They said it couldn't buy good health but it could get you the best doctors, the first and best organs, the freshest blood, and heck with enough money if you die, your brain could be harnessed and put into another body. They said money couldn't buy sound sleep but it could get you the best sleep inducers with little to no side effects. So, what the heck did they mean?

"Jenny, meet the Boss of the Boss. I wasn't expecting we would meet him today, but it seems luck is on your side."

Jenny was brought out of her reverie by Che's voice. The boss of the boss meant she was already a step ahead in her plan. She then turned her line of sight in the direction Che gestured to with a hand poised in the offer of a handshake.

"Good day Sir, it-" Jenny's eyes widened. Horror had struck. Her village people seemed to be after her again. They didn't want her to be rich and happy, it was indeed a tragedy. Her well-crafted plan had just been shattered due to mere oversight.

Background study. She didn't study where she was going to, whom she was meeting, and whom they associated with. For a smart girl like herself, she at that moment felt quite dumb. Standing in front of her was the barrier between herself and her dreams. A barrier as powerful as the Wall of China. Why oh why? Why her?

"Ngwa Jennifer." The new person spoke coldly, it felt like it was raining hailstones. Despite how tense the environment was between Jenny and the stranger, Che seemed oblivious to it.

"Mr. Njie, you already know her?" he laughed, "wow, what a small world."

Jenny was tightlipped. She lacked the words if there were any right words in such a situation.

Njie Brandon. Her ex. The ex she terribly dissed and treated horribly because he was miserably poor. She hadn't bothered to keep tabs on him because he barely seemed like one to amount to anything. She couldn't even remember what made her get into a relationship with someone as miserable as him.

Yet, this was a refined man standing in front of her in a well-polished suit and being referred to as the boss of the boss. She couldn't even compare to him in her measly second-hand midi dress and overworn sandals. How was this even possible? When did he achieve all this? Could this be real?

"Get her out of my building immediately." Mr. Njie declared venomously.

There wasn't enough time in the world for Jenny to reminisce about all the horrible things she did and said to him. Sitting on the cold steps by the gate of his building, for the first time ever, Jenny wondered if her plan and want for money was wrong.

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