

Let me tell you a story. This isn't one about love but you'd think it is. Love is a very deep river but there are bigger seas.

At exactly 4:00am on Tuesday the 4th of February, the phone rang. This was unusual least because of the hour but also because of who was calling. Reluctantly, he reached for his phone and answered the call.

"It's barely dawn Rachel"

"Yes Henry" the voice responded rather anxious "but how did you know about it?"

"Know about what?" he replied still half awake

"Who told you about it Henry? Answer me!" the voice continued, this time more demanding.

"I think you need to go back to sleep you've got me confused with someone else. We'll talk this evening". He said now fully awake 'It's too early for..."

"I know you Henry." She cut in crying as she did "You barely talk about your feelings but you write them down. Tell me who told you about this."

Henry in a weird combination of confusion and sympathy decided to calm things down "alright dear talk to me about it. I want to know what's really happening"

"But you already do...you wrote a poem about...about it and sent to me yesterday". Rachel said interrupting herself with sobs. She continued "...but you only know how to...how to express yourself with your poems. If someone told you, just tell me. I...I" she burst out in tears again.

Henry spoke in his calm deep morning voice "I promise you that no one told me anything. The poem had nothing to do with...with anything you're talking about. Hell! I don't seem know what you mean".

He thought about yelling at her but he decided otherwise. "I promise we'll get a solution today...just get some sleep. You know how much I love you".

"I know" she said. A bit too calm for someone who was just crying, then she hung up.

He lay on the bed trying to force himself back to sleep but the call coupled with the fact that he had to go to work made it hard. He settled on preparing for work so he tried to get himself in a good mood, he played R. Kelly's when a woman loves on his sound system. That only made things worse because he couldn't get Rachel off his mind. He decided it was best to play another song. No sooner had he concluded on the right artiste for his morning than when his phone rang again. "Not again!" he thought "it was Mike the bag".

"Hey bro! Sorry to wake you up this early" the sound of his best friend burst through the eerie atmosphere. "But I need a favour from you".

"Mike, it's five a.m. in the morning. Your favour couldn't wait till ...I don't know, maybe when the whole world is awake?" Henry retorted starting to get angry.

"Well you see Henry, technically that's impossible. One half of the world is always awake at any time and that also means that half the world is at sleep. It would be rather difficult to get the whole world to be awake plus you know that..."

"For God's sake Mike! I am not in the mood for your games this morning. Just say what you want"

"Wow Henry, what put you in this mood this morning? Well straight to the point then. You know I have had it tough these few months looking for a job. Now my land lord would be coming around very soon. I have not been picking his calls. I feel he might show up anytime now. I really would not be doing this if it wasn't important Henry but you know I have no one else so I was wondering if..."

"You want to come stay at my place?" Henry cut in.

"Just till the weekend. I promise..." Mike replied.

"It's fine Mike. You can stay". Henry said a bit uninterested "but next time, just don't call me when half the world's asleep or I'll be forced to put you to sleep too".

"Copy that sir!" Mike sounded like a little baby now

Henry ended the call and was even more confused than when he started his day.

He had to rush now. The day already felt like it was half spent. There was so much to think about. Why did his girlfriend wake him up with sobs and questions? Why did she end the call that way? What was in the poem anyway?

He had spoken to her till 11pm last night and they had agreed to meet the evening of the next day.

And why did his best friend also call him with a reason, seemingly genuine but ridiculous nonetheless. And when did he start having rent issues? All these thoughts flooded Henry's mind like raindrops on a stormy morning.

Goodness me! I'm going to be late to work today". Henry said thinking to himself "It's almost six in the morning and I haven't had my bath let's not talk about the traffic to contend with on the way". Maybe I need some gospel music to start off today. Michael W. Smith maybe.

Damn it! This is not how I planned my day to go!! He screamed out.

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Henry lived in the G.R.A. area in Ikeja, Lagos. He was the only son of very wealthy parents, Mr. And Mrs. Koker. He had just one sister, the very beautiful and troublesome Irene koker. While Henry was the conservative one, Irene was adventurous. She would let her mind run wild with imaginations and Henry would have to bring her back to earth. They lost their mum about a month ago after loosing their dad five years earlier. She was buried immediately. Of course, they had no issues about the will of their parents. They had received their share 60-40 in favour of Henry. However due to Irene's personality, they agreed that they'd keep the valuable items, diamonds and gold, with Henry. With Irene, they'd be lost as quickly as they came. Henry moved to Lagos but you can take the prince out of the palace but you can't take the palace out of the King so despite the fact he wanted to be ordinary, he still wound up in a large 3-bedroom apartment. Then he met Rachel and he knew he'd struck gold. She was all he ever wanted, boy

was she beautiful! She would barely criticise him nor complain about the way he lived and he was a bit weird in his preferences. Everything was going according to plan. He had met Mike six months before her and like fish in water, Henry's life revolved around these two. Now, he had a date with one of them.

Henry looked at his watch for the hundredth time that evening. He was waiting for Rachel. She didn't pick his calls all day and then her phone was switched off. This made him even more worried. He had cooked up a thousand possible reasons why this Tuesday was a bad day and every single one of those reasons had Rachel in it.

They both had a agreement that if someone was unable to make it to a date, they would call to cancel and if a call wasn't possible then a text would suffice and if none of them was possible then whoever was stood up could leave after an hour. Henry had just waited an hour and twenty minutes and he was still alone. Three times the waiter had come to ask him what he would have for dinner. Three times, the response was the same. "I'm waiting for my love. She would soon be here". He was so proud to call her his love in front of everyone. It was already time to leave and she would understand but maybe he should just stay a little longer. Then he got a call that jolted him out of his reverie. It was Mike.

"Hey, Mike."

"Hey Henry...err it's getting late and you're not here yet"

"Yeah. You can lock the doors I have my keys here" Henry was eager to end the call.

"Alright bro. I made dinner too"

"I'm not hungry Mike. But thanks anyway. We'll talk when I'm home".

"OK and hey Henry, Rachel came around. She left something for you and asked me not to open it".

"I'm on my way home"

On a good day, the drive home was half an hour. But today, Henry did it in half that time. He shouted from the door like a soldier breaking into enemy territory.

“Mike! Where are you?” there was no response “Mike...Mike!”

“Hey Henry. I thought you said you would be late” Mike responded half dizzy walking into the living room

“I never said that” Henry retorted immediately. He continued “You said Rachel was here. What did she come to do?”

“Well, she left you a note. Said she was sorry for the way things went and that you’d understand in time”.

There was a long pause. The silence was deafening. His mind brought all his permutations to one reality. He had not taken his mind down that lane.

“Let me see it.” He said in a voice that was almost a whisper.

He took the piece of paper from Mike.

It had only five sentences.

I don’t love you like you do me. It’s complicated but I don’t want you to keep wishing. So, I’ve made the choice to walk away from your life. And if you need an answer to your poem, my answer is yes. You’ll be fine, stay safe.

“Stay safe? Am I down with corona virus?” If she didn’t love me, why did she lead me on?” Henry sank down to the wooden floors. Everything flashed before his eyes in a second. This was the woman he had chosen to spend the rest of his life with and she was doing this to him. “How did I miss it? But she said she loved me”.

Then he remembered she didn’t say it back that morning when he had said he loved her on the call. She didn’t say what the problem was. He had been fooled. He was feeling all the terrible emotions now, bad hurt, lost, resentment, rejected, abused and laughed at.

He brought out his phone to look at the poem that started his downfall. He had written many before just because he liked writing. He would show each one to her after editing them. Sometimes she edited them for him. But it was his way of expressing his emotions.

He opened his notes app and scrolled down to the poem.

There it was. Still nameless. But he knew what he'd call it now. He read it again.

It got to you, didn't it?

Was it the tough wind or the raging sea?

Was it the many loud constant voices or the lack thereof?

Was it the bills piling high or the future looking blank?

We're all living but when life chooses to get to you,

It's got a plethora of weapons. Its arsenal is formidable.

Different strokes for different folks. May the odds be in your favour.

What was it that pulled you down the lane? What

Brought you eye bags and an aching head every fortnight, gave

You a mind that never stops craving for a future from the past.

Anything but the present because the present isn't pleasant.

I knew you as a happy heart which bore a warm hug and big smile.

But you were a rocking chair, too easily swung this way or that.

Life got to you, didn't it? It got to you and it got to you pretty fast.

And I'm guessing it didn't give you much of a choice when it did.

You were a cub thrown into the wild too early. And cubs

Don't remain cubs forever. You had to adapt.

HR.

He would name it shadow.

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Wednesday was a pretty good day for Henry, considering how Tuesday started. He wanted to be alone and heaven granted his request. Mike decided that he'd go back to his house. They left the house together. Henry to work and Mike to his house. But by evening time, the drama was back. He tried to drink his pain away but he never drank alcohol so he bought a bottle and stared at it until it was time to go home. But when he opened the door to his house, it was upside down. He had been robbed. Half the paintings on his wall were gone. His expensive wrist watches were also gone. He was going to call the police when he had a knock on his door. He thought the thieves were back but when he peeped through the door, he couldn't believe his eyes.

"I have heard of talking monkeys and weightlifting horses. I've been robbed this evening and tried to get drunk but I couldn't. Yet the one thing that I never thought could happen was you" Henry said as he opened the door for Rachel.

"You weren't robbed Henry. Mike stole from you" Rachel said with a mixture of regret and pity in her voice. "Can I come in?"

After they had sat down, Rachel explained to Henry.

"I and Mike were lovers and con artistes before we met you. Mike got to know that you were from big money. He came up with a plan to set me up with you so I could get your money and then we'd run away together. You were our last target and our final score. You were supposed to be our breakthrough. Mike would get close to you too. Be your best friend so he could make sure to convince you about me. The problem was you fell in love and I feel for you too. Mike didn't like that. I told him that we could stay. I would get your money anyway and he would benefit from our marriage but he didn't listen. We had an argument." Rachel stood up and was pacing the room now.

Two days ago, you send me that poem and I thought he told you about our plan. So, I messed up and called you but you didn't know about it. Then I called Mike and told him what I did. He said he'd fix it. That was when he called you to come stay at your place. He told me not to contact you again. He wrote the note to you and said it was me. I have always been the brain. He's just muscle but he actually did pull this one off. He took your keys and when you went to work, he duplicated them. Then he made sure to leave with you and return your keys so you'd not trace it back to him and today while you were at work, he came back to ransack your house.

Henry, I know this is hard for you to take in now but I love you and that's why I came back. It's the truth.

Henry stood up. Gave her a grim look and said "you lied to me and you still want me to believe you. You're bold! I'd give you that". Then he casually strolled into his room. "Good night".

When Henry woke up the next day. The house was quiet. He was pondering over what to do with Rachel. He had slept over it but it still felt no different about it. Something felt off. He called out her name but she didn't reply.

He continued to walk around preparing for work then he found a note. This time, in Rachel's handwriting.

"Mike was always the foolish one. Yet I love him. He took a lot of things that were worthless. I had to come back for the diamonds. Your mum's. I know they're precious to you so please forgive me. Regarding that lovely poem of yours. There are three oldest weapons of life: Love, money and power.

Love got to me. I fell for a thief. Money got to Mike he wants what he can't have. Love got to you. Just unlucky. Life got to us all. Power would be you using your affluence to chase us down. I hope you don't. Allow us this last loot."