

## Kunle's Burial.

Adenike Desmond, A.K.A, Iya Kunle was burying her son on the first of April. Iya Kunle was quite short but not stout. She had a receding hairline but still wouldn't stop plaiting Ghana weaving. She had a dark skin that she took care of very well with her dead husband's money and wasn't ashamed to say she was using his money. When asked how she keeps her skin fresh, she would always say, "My dead husband left enough money for me to use to take care of myself." Sometimes the way Iya Kunle spoke about her dead husband, you might think she was the one who killed him.

Everyone attending Kunle's send-off was dressed in *Aso Ebi*, a testament to his mother's insistence that her son deserved an extravagant farewell, unlike the typical *Ankara*-clad send-offs. When some guests expressed their inability to afford *Aso Ebi*, Iya Kunle responded by dramatically snatching their invitations back.

"Don't come if you can't comply. We're trying to manage expenses, and you're complaining," she retorted while using her teeth to dislodge a stubborn piece of meat stuck between her teeth. Iya Kunle ensured to eat at every house she visited to distributing invitations. At Iya Dupe's house, she went a step further, urging her friend to borrow money for a Lace outfit, given their close relationship. The next day, Iya Dupe borrowed money to purchase the Lace material.

Pastor Micheal stood behind the casket, also clad in *Aso Ebi*. Iya Kunle had made it abundantly clear that the dress code extended to everyone, including the pastor, who was not permitted to wear his usual suit.

Pastor Micheal had been Iya Kunle's family pastor for a very long time and was even the one who dedicated Kunle. He was a short stout man with big, rimmed glasses to hide his four 'o'clock eyes.

Pastor Micheal cleared his throat and commenced, "We are gathered here today to witness the send-off of Olakunle Babatunde Desmond-

"Pastor, I told you it's not a burial! It's a send-forth!" Iya Kunle interjected.

"*E ma binu Iya Kunle*," the pastor apologized.

Iya Kunle adjusted her *gele* and muttered under her breath, "*Mi o binu*. I already told you it's not a burial. Pastor, please be guided."

The pastor sighed and continued, "Kunle was a loving child, and it's truly sad that he won't be with us anymore." From the back, someone shouted, "*oma se ooo*," which was Auntie Tochi, Iya Kunle's friend. She was the only one unable to acquire the desired Lace outfit and settled for the *Aso Ebi*. In her annoyance, Iya Kunle instructed her to sit at the back like the other guests, stating, "You cannot come and disrupt the pattern. My son deserves the best."

Auntie Tochi was initially furious, but the sight of the souvenirs Iya Kunle was distributing quickly changed her mind.

As the service progressed, the church doors swung open, capturing everyone's attention. A lady dressed in black entered, holding a five-year-old boy's hand. A hushed murmur swept through the room as she walked down the aisle. What shocked everyone more was the fact that she was white.

Iya Kunle couldn't believe her eyes. "Who are you?" she demanded, rising to adjust her *iro* as her gaze then fell on the child.

The lady replied, "Hi, I am Amanda, Kunle's wife." Chaos ensued, with some people muttering disapproving remarks about Kunle's choice, while others questioned his judgment. From the back, words like "*mo sa mo pe omo buruku ni Kunle yen*" and "*oma se ooo.*" Amanda simply stood there, smiling, and that irritated Iya Kunle. A lot.

Kunle's actual wife, Tomiwa, was also taken aback. She exchanged a stunned glance with her mother-in-law. Tomiwa couldn't fathom how her husband had married another woman while in the United States, supposedly setting up his company. She recognized Amanda from a trip to the U.S. a year ago when Kunle had introduced her as his secretary.

Tomiwa had been a devoted wife, sticking by Kunle through thick and thin, even providing financial support during his company's inception. Despite all this, Kunle's infidelity had shattered her, and now, to make matters worse, he was dead.

Kunle and Tomiwa had met in university and shared an instant chemistry. They dated for four years before tying the knot. Initially, Iya Kunle did not like Tomiwa because of her fair skin but after some months, she really didn't mind anymore. "Just give me a fine grandson *jo*", she said when Kunle had asked her about her dislike for his wife.

Iya Kunle eventually regained her composure and sat down. "*Ejo Pastor continue. Aa ni pe se tan*" Amanda took a seat beside a tearful Tomiwa, cradling her child on her lap. Tomiwa glanced at the child beside her and began to cry.

During the tributes, Iya Kunle went first. Rather than standing, she spoke from her seat, claiming she was too shocked to do otherwise. Unlike most mothers who would have likely shed tears at the loss of their child, Iya Kunle remained dry-eyed. This lack of emotion puzzled everyone, especially considering that nobody knew the circumstances of Kunle's death, not even Tomiwa. No one had seen Kunle's lifeless body; Iya Kunle had simply delivered invitations without revealing any details.

"Last year Kunle told me he would get me a car on my sixtieth birthday but unfortunately, I would be the one getting myself a car then. Kunle was so full of surprises that he even surprised us after his death with another wife and child."

After 15 minutes, Iya Kunle concluded her tribute, and Tomiwa chose not to give one, fearing she might curse Kunle in his casket. Amanda spoke about Kunle as a caring husband and father, while Tomiwa contemplated how she could ensure Amanda joined Kunle in the grave.

As the casket was taken to the graveyard, the attendees followed. At the gravesite, only Amanda poured sand onto the casket. Tomiwa was too overwhelmed with anger to

participate, and Iya Kunle refrained from burying her child because it wasn't normal for a mother to bury her child.

Following the interment, the guests proceeded to the reception, held in a spacious, air-conditioned hall, offering ample food and drinks. Iya Kunle had outdone herself.

Just as the servers were preparing to distribute food, chaos erupted at the back of the hall, with some guests even running. Those in the middle were baffled until they, too, started fleeing. At the hall's entrance stood Kunle, drenched in sweat, panting heavily, as if he had been running a marathon.

Shock rippled through the crowd as Kunle strolled in. Guests huddled against one side of the room, apprehensive and bewildered. Kunle surveyed the scene, noticing banners displaying his face and the words "Gone to be with the Lord." He began to laugh, moving toward his mother, Iya Kunle.

When Iya Kunle spotted her son, she joined in the laughter. The entire room was now caught between astonishment and confusion. Hadn't Kunle been dead? What was happening?

Kunle prostrated to greet his mother, still chuckling. He stood up and remarked, "Mom, this isn't funny. You took it too far, planning my own burial when I'm very much alive."

"That's why I called it a send-forth, not a burial," Iya Kunle replied, her own laughter bubbling forth. "You know I can play April Fool's pranks too."

### **A Year Ago...**

"Mom, let's place a bet and see who can prank the most people on April Fool's Day," Kunle suggested spontaneously during one of his visits to his mother, Iya Kunle. She glanced at him from the corner of her eye and let out an exasperated hiss.

"*Nkan se yin*," she muttered as she returned her attention to her phone. Iya Kunle's friend, Auntie Tochi, chuckled in response. Auntie Tochi was one of the "aunties" you had to address as such, and she had been friends with Iya Kunle for over a year. They often exchanged invitations, visiting each other's homes.

Auntie Tochi's laughter subsided, and she couldn't resist asking, "Kunle, why on earth would you suggest something like that?" Kunle simply shrugged and refocused his efforts on convincing his mother.

"Mom, seriously, it'll be fun, and if you win, I'll get you a car for your sixtieth birthday," he proposed. At the mention of a car, Iya Kunle's head snapped toward Kunle's direction.

"So, you weren't planning to get me a car for my birthday before?" Iya Kunle questioned; her tone tinged with annoyance. "Do I have to beg you? Don't I celebrate you?"

"*Ehn, Iya Kunle e fara bale*," Kunle interjected. "I'm just saying that if you win this bet, the car is guaranteed. I promise to celebrate you, too, of course."

Iya Kunle put down her phone, contemplating the idea. It didn't seem like a bad deal. Plus, the prospect of getting a new car was quite enticing. All she had to do was tell Kunle the specific car she wanted.

"Kunle, I want a Highlander 2022," she stated, her gaze averted. Kunle smiled and responded, "Sure, Mummy. But by the time you turn sixty, that car won't be the latest model anymore."

"Then get me the newest version of the Highlander when I turn sixty," Iya Kunle asserted.

### **Present Time...**

"Ahh!" Aunty Tochi exclaimed from the midst of the crowd. "Iya Kunle, you took it too far! We thought he was actually dead!"

"Well, he isn't, Tochi," Iya Kunle replied with laughter in her voice. "I had to win the bet! And it's not as if you won't enter that car with me oh."

Sensing the confusion in the room, Iya Kunle rose to explain the prank to the guests, and soon, everyone joined in the laughter.

After the laughter had died down, Aunty Tochi couldn't resist asking, "Kunle, what was your own prank?"

Kunle paused for a moment, then confessed, "My prank involved the wife and child. Amanda isn't my wife, and the child with her is her adopted son. I had discussed the prank with her, and she was willing to help."

Waves of "ah" and "ahan" spread through the room as the truth sank in. Only then did Kunle recall his actual wife, Tomiwa. He hadn't anticipated that things would unfold this way. Originally, Amanda was supposed to go to his mother's house, but since she had received an invitation as his secretary, she decided to execute the prank at the church without Tomiwa's knowledge.

Kunle went in search of Tomiwa and found her outside the hall, tears streaming down her cheeks. He felt a pang of guilt; he hadn't anticipated the extent of his mother's prank. Cautiously, he approached her and began to apologize.

"I'm so sorry, Tomiwa. I never expected the prank to go so wrong," he said, finally reaching her and gently taking her hand. He used his fingers to wipe away her tears and chuckled.

Tomiwa, though still annoyed, couldn't help but inquire, "Why are you laughing?"

"Because Amanda instructed me to rush here after she arrived. I had no idea what my mother was planning until Amanda told me today. She said it looked like you wanted her in that casket too," Kunle explained between breaths. Tomiwa couldn't help but join in the laughter.

"You know what? I wouldn't have minded burying her too, the way she was talking about you being a loving father and husband," Tomiwa admitted.

Kunle took his wife's hand and brought it to his lips. "I think it's about time we consider having a baby, don't you?" he suggested with a grin.

### **In the Hall...**

Laughter still echoed throughout the room as guests continued to discuss the elaborate prank Iya Kunle had orchestrated. One of her friends couldn't resist asking, "So, do we get a new car now?"

Iya Kunle wondered about the identity of the "we" in the question.

Aunty Tochi sidled up to her friend and whispered, "So that's why you made sure I couldn't get the Lace outfit, thinking it would be a waste of money?"

Iya Kunle laughed and responded, "Yes, indeed. If you had bought the Lace, my dear friend, it would have been a waste of money."

Aunty Tochi glanced around the room, spotting Iya Dupe in the Lace outfit. Iya Kunle followed her gaze and laughed.

"Ah, Iya Dupe? Let me tell you what she did to me a while ago," Iya Kunle began, leading her friend to a nearby table, where they sat down. She narrated an incident that took place several months earlier.

"I visited Iya Dupe's place a few months back, and she claimed there was nothing to offer me. So, I gave her *omo odo*, Ronke, some money to fetch me a bottle of malt. After I handed her the money, I excused myself to use the bathroom. Can you believe Iya Dupe took the money from Ronke while I was away and instructed her to tell me she couldn't find it?"

Aunty Tochi's mouth hung open in disbelief. "That's not fair at all! How could she do something like that?"

Iya Kunle shrugged. "I couldn't care less about that. What bothered me more was that, while I was on my way to the bathroom, I spotted a carton of malt near her room."

Aunty Tochi burst into laughter. "So that's why you insisted she buy the Lace outfit!"

Iya Kunle leaned in closer and whispered something into her friend's ear, causing Aunty Tochi to laugh even harder.

"You mean she borrowed money to buy the Lace?" Aunty Tochi asked incredulously. Iya Kunle playfully placed a finger on her lips, urging her to hush. They both looked over at Iya Dupe and shared another round of laughter.

Suddenly, Iya Dupe stood up and inquired, "*Shay* we are not going to eat the party *Jollof* Rice again?"