

The day I met Sade, the weather defied logic.

It rained during harmattan.

That should have been a sign but I attributed it to climate change. Silly me.

It was a dark evening.

I walked down the streets of Lagos, hugging my bag to my chest.

I was soaked but I knew better than to rush into any bus on a rainy Lagos day. Again.

I had waited at the bus stop hoping to get one. But 200 other people had the same idea.

You might say 200 is a stretch, but I don't think it is. I think I haven't exaggerated the number enough.

You see, when the 1st 2 buses pulled up, I didn't move for the lack of strength. Plus it hadn't started raining then.

I believed I could wait the people out.

By the 3rd bus, the sky had started a vengeful cacophony. By the 4th, the clouds began tearing themselves apart in protest of the noise.

Before the 5th bus pulled up, the soil I stood in was soaking up tears. I knew I had to fight.

But you need to understand that when it comes to fighting in Lagos, there are no rules, there is no umpire.

To fight for a seat on a danfo was a battle. The fight for a seat on a danfo, after work, when it was raining? Was war.

So I accepted that my shirt would get stained. I rolled up the sleeves and prepared to rush in when the bright yellow vehicle showed its face.

I rushed in, my phone in my bag, my bag at my side.

I remember touching the seat of the bus, but that is all I remember.

When I came to, it was to a bunch of "eya", "madam sorry oh", "why you sef go dey rush".

I picked up my bag, clutched it to my chest and started walking.

At least that way I would get home alive.

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When he drove up to me, I just kept on walking.

He brought his window down and shouted in the most interesting accent, "where are you going?"

I didn't stop, I wasn't trying to be rude.

But I watch true crime shows, be serious. Why would I enter a man's car on a dark, rainy evening?

So that I would be one of the many women missing in Lagos?
I never retweeted a missing person in my life. Karma is crazy, I could be the one person that no one cared about.

My parents didn't even want me here, if anything happened to me?

I clutched my bag and walked faster.
He kept honking the horn..

Eventually, I looked up at the man in the car. He was kind of pretty.
But pretty boys kill too.

"You really shouldn't be walking in the rain, let me help you," he called out.

The sky was vengeful that day, the clouds poured all their frustration on me. The more I walked, the more anger the sky let out.

It was a full blown storm. Either this man killed me in his car or the rain would. I decided it would be much more fun hunting a man as a ghost than being on rain duty.

I walked towards the car and he unlocked the door.

- Danfo: the stupid yellow machine that refused my advances and pushed me into the arms of a Lagos man.

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I know what you're going to say.

"How could you trust a man in Laygurz?" "You should've known he was too good to be true"

I know, I know. I felt it in my soul everytime I looked at him. I used to call him big head. Not because his head was big, it was the perfect shape actually. He had a cute button nose, his eyes were brown, his ears the perfect sized, the perfect home for 2 stud earrings.

I called him big head because isn't that the way I'm meant to show love? It's in the Nigerian women handbook.

But why did I let it go far? You might be wondering.

Honestly I'm not sure.

My friends asked me how I thought I could keep a Lagos man.
Stupid me.

I had just returned from doing my phd.
IJGB or what do they call us?

I was 25 years young and unaware. After slaving away to graduate with honors and get a high paying job, I decided it was the perfect time to the detty December thing I always saw on the TL.

I took a break and flew down to Nigeria to surprise my parents. Boy were they surprised.

It wasn't the surprise I expected though. I honestly started to think, after the 10th, "but what are you doing here?" That they actually didn't want me in Nigeria. But when have I ever listened?

Mummy said go back, I did her one better and got a holiday job.

My parents have always taken pride in providing for me so you can understand their vivid shock when I told them I'd be working.

My friends were shocked as well.

"Why would you come to Naij for detty December and get a job?"

There was tangible disgust in Tara's face when she asked me that question. She had pronounced "Naij" with her tongue rolled in superiority, like her years in London had stolen the syllables left in the name.

I always pronounced Nigeria in full. She hated that. Actually my whole friend group did. I had begun to think they might as well hate me and they were only keeping around as a status symbol. My parents were rich, their parents were rich, it made sense we were friends.

Well, not to me.

Why would I spend my month with people that don't care about me, when I could spend it doing what I love? Working that is.

I got a job in a place no one knew me because I didn't want preferential treatment. I wanted to see how Nigeria treats its people.

Some people might say I'm romanticizing poverty, but that's not it. I was just getting experience.

So I got a job at a charity as their PR specialist. They had a lot to do in December and I knew I could help with that. They had never heard of a PR specialist before but I knew they needed my services, so I volunteered.

I had mapped out the perfect December, hosting events and using daddy to pull big guests to donate.

Of course when they asked, I never said I used my dad. I said it was by Gods grace.

The events I held were always so long and strenuous.

It's one of those events that pushed me into the hands of Sade.

That day, I had made the charity a lot of money. The owner had made me kneel down and prayed for, well, my husband?

I'm unsure of how things happen in Nigeria because I've been away for so long but I could've sworn she said she wanted to pray for me. Still all I heard was, "your husband will have money!" "God will give you good good husband!"

There was also the resounding shaking and shouting by the staff as they belted out 'Amen's and 'Ami's.

Well they might not have prayed well enough, or maybe my misfortune was caused because I had spent the whole time stifling a giggle instead of saying amen.

I stepped out of the event that day into a gust of dry wind. So you can understand my boldness to take a danfo and not just call for a driver. Plus, I was trying to blend in. Although, my accent always made me stand out like a sore thumb.

The rain came as a surprise. Ending my day in a man's car was an even greater shock.

The entire car ride was serenaded with the Love, Damini album. He didn't say much except to ask where I was going, if the temperature was okay and to offer me a jacket, which I instantly declined because I'm a hard guy.

Plus, getting a lift was enough help. I'd figured I would have to pay him with my number.

But, get this, he never asked.

We spent an hour in the car together and he never commented on my shirt clinging to my chest. He didn't make any advances, and worst of all, he didn't ask for my number. Let's forget Lagos men for a second, which man does that? I had to check his hand for a wedding band. There was none.

I was perplexed, I don't think you understand. I'm a smart girl but I'm a hot girl. I hate men making unnecessary advances, but it feels weird when they don't. I don't know if that makes sense. Especially fine men like this.

So I did the unthinkable. I asked for his number.

- Phone: a device that is used for communication. Every phone has a sim, with a number. That number is usually exchanged by 2 people who wish to keep in touch, or in this case, one person that wants the other to keep in touch, and well, the other.

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I texted immediately. I was curious, don't judge me.

I needed to know if he didn't find me attractive. Why hadn't he asked for my number? What gives?

And yes, I asked him that.

He said he didn't want to be overbearing.

I said he wasn't.

We talked for a bit then he aired me.

Or so I thought.

I realized a week after that I had done the airing. I know, I know, I'm a horrible person.

Honestly, I'd forgotten about him.

I'm a busy babe, I don't have time to be texting a man.

When we did start talking again though, we took off.

I realized after our first conversation on the phone that he was the love of my life. And no, I'm not exaggerating.

I know I said I'm busy but somehow I made time for him. We talked for hours on FaceTime.

I introduced him to my dogs, my couch, my bed. It's safe to say I became the meme of the man on the phone with a broom cushioned between his legs as they balance on the wall.

I did everything for love. My detty December plans became wrapped around him.

He was the plan.

He had just got back from the US. He decided to work in his fathers company. He was the heir, he had to learn the ropes.

So I would leave him in Lagos and go back to the UK.

A week to my departure, he took me to the beach.

He stooped low and asked me to be his girl in the sand. He said he didn't care that we had to be long distance and I believed him.

How could I have believed a Lagos man? I must have been raving mad.

I said yes and a rose gold double-tier cake materialised.

And so we were official.

I got back to London and it felt like there was vacancy in my heart. It felt weird. I had never been in love before.

I had begun to believe I would never feel it.

But I felt it, it was heavy.

Love was magnetic. My heart constantly attempted to leap out of my chest to go in search for it's missing piece.

I always responded that Nigeria was too far plus I had always said I wouldn't change my life for a man, but my heart was hell bent.

On the night I made up my mind, we had just ended a FaceTime, I was on my period and hence very emotional. My heart had seized the opportunity to bring forth its strong reason.

This time I listened.

I sent a mail to HR and booked a flight to Nigeria.

- Love: a deceiver. An overwhelming feeling of want. A need that cannot be quenched. A longing that cannot be stopped. A thirst that cannot be filled. A rubbish thing.

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When I arrived in Nigeria, I was greeted with "you shouldn't have". I should have listened and run.

My parents thought I was going mad. Maybe I was. First love has that power (Yes, first love at 25, it happens. You're not here to judge me, remember?).

But I stayed.

In his defense, the months I spent with him were the time of my life.

I moved home, I worked with my dad in the day, volunteered at the charity and saw him in the evenings.

We always had dinner together. Sometimes he cooked. Other times we went out.

I never cooked. Let just say my meals are more on the char side.

He was the best boyfriend.

When I introduced him to my parents, they had fallen in love immediately. My mum had suddenly become handsy but I let it slide.

He was a hot man after all.

His parents liked me as well.

We were together for a month short of a year but everyone expected a marriage.

He was actually perfect. My perfect man.

He was the perfect blend of caramel and chocolate. God made him will all the sugar in the world.

My friends couldn't believe it. They were sure he was cheating.

Tara asked me once to go through his phone, she said he must have a family outside.

I never checked. I didn't need to.

I knew him. He would never hurt me.

Or so I thought.

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I received the call when I was at work.

I had just stepped out of a meeting and checked my phone. I had missed 3 calls from him.

I thought I knew why he was calling. So I delayed my return.

He had tasked me to find a restaurant for us for the night. He always did it, he decided it was time I pulled some weight. He said I was too lazy with planning. He was right of course. But would I let him win? Of course not.

So I spent an hour perusing TripAdvisor to find the perfect restaurant. Then I returned the call.

No sound.

His phone was switched off. Odd.

His phone was never off. I tried again and again, still off.

Then I received a call from an unknown number.

I picked up.

I answered to my name and then the words "sorry", "car crash", "serious condition" came floating out of the speaker.

My ears tingled, my brain barely comprehended my question of the hospital they were in. One minute i was rushing to the car park, the other, i was stumbling into the hospital. I'm unsure of how we got there. But by the time i arrived, I was numb.

- Numb: feeling a surge of different emotions all at once and suddenly, feeling nothing at all.

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When I say I was stupid for trusting a Lagos man, it's not because he turned out to be just like other Lagos men.

On the contrary.

He was an exception, an anomaly.

Eko is proud of the men she churns out. She invests time in hardening their hearts, inflicting a spring in their steps and lining their lips and tongue with honey.
Eko churns out men to inflict pain.

To think that a person could exist outside her precise plans was tomfoolery. I fooled myself.

Eko sensed the anomaly and revolted. She dragged him back to the soil from which he came from.

Sade promised me he would never hurt me. But he did.

He left me for Eko. He let her have her way.

Before I got to his side, he was gone.

Forgive me if I sound pained. I am.

I thought love was the greatest force. Love couldn't stop that truck from toppling over on his car?

Love couldn't help them get him out faster?

The three calls were from good samaritans. Even if I had picked I wouldn't have heard his voice. I don't know how I feel about that.

I don't know how I feel about any of it.

The one I love is gone.

I should have chosen rain duty.