

I KILLED MY BELOVED

I liked the way Ndidi smelled. Like fresh lemon grass and sometimes, rosemary. I used to tell him it's because he cooked too much. But he'll remind me in that his sweet, mellow voice that my love language is food and he wants to love me right. He'd then lift me into the air and nuzzle my nape and I'd laugh like a child at a carnival.

'Ndidi –time' was what I coined the period away from lights, camera, action! Being a celebrity in Nigeria seems as if it's all glitz and glamour. Everybody loves Akada the icon whose voice was handcrafted and implanted in her larynx by God himself, sent to the earth to bless it.

But let's not forget the gloom too. You're constantly juggling a tight rope between love and intense hatred. Especially as a woman. You have to do your job and you have to do it best and you have to ensure you don't lose the balance. Or you Fall. Off.

But with Ndidi, I didn't have to do the most or try too hard. He knew Akada. He loved Akada. In fact, he was a fanboy of her. But, he also saw Akachi Darling as the imperfect woman she was and loved her twice as much.

Whenever I returned to my million dollar mansion, Ndidi was there with the table set, a wide smile and nimble fingers ready for a pre-dinner massage. Ndidi would say, "Come, my love. No more now. Rest." And at the sound of that, in the way of an unfurling ball of yarn, my muscles melt to his touch.

Ndidi–time was the pole that helped Akachi keep her balance as Akada The Icon on The Nigerian Music Industry Tightrope.

Until the day it finally happened.

But before I get ahead of myself, how *did* I meet Ndidi?

I met him at the checkout of a grocery store I went to in town. I was on full disguise mode because I needed this particular product and my go-to store was out of it.

Confident in my disguise, I placed my bag upon the counter. The cashier barely glanced at me as he calculated the price. I'd already paid for it and was about leaving when he said something that caught me off guard.

"Maybe I should've charged Akada higher."

I had two choices: One, act like I didn't hear and move along with the risk of him repeating it louder. And two, tell him he's mistaken, hold up the line longer and draw attention to myself.

I decided to play innocent. I glanced back at him with a faux–confused expression on my face. He flashed his pearly whites at me in way too familiar for that statement to be a guess. He was

sure I was Akada and now, he knew that I knew he knew.

I fled.

The second time I met Ndidi, he was walked right up to me. I was at a restaurant in my gated community. I did not recognise him, don't judge me, I'm famous. I see people everyday. But once again, he did.

"You're Akada, right?"

Staring up at this caramel skinned man with the most beautiful honey eyes, I just assumed he was a celebrity. I knew he was not a musician because I knew people in my industry, but I was guessing most likely a famous actor. He wasn't too tall and his build was rather slim but, those eye would make them beg.

I slid my shades off my face and adjusted my hair. "Hey, beautiful eyes! It's she, how may I help you?" Akada is a 'confident, passionate, african queen'. Akachi just cringed inside.

He chuckled, then pointed to the chair in front of me. "Can I sit?"

For the first time, I genuinely didn't mind a total stranger intruding on my personal time. This man, with this intense eyes and gentle smile, got me intrigued.

He sat down with my permission. And we talked. And talked and laughed. Laughter turned to giggles, talking turned to flirting, numbers were exchanged and that's how I met my beloved, Ndidi.

The day it started was just like every other day. I returned from a tour and there he was; my dreamboat. He opened the door wide and I jumped into his arms, smothering him with love and affection. He laughed that laugh I'm so familiar with. The laugh I longed for the nights I cried myself to sleep, drinking way too many bottles of alcohol.

He carried me like a baby into the bedroom and the events that followed after I cannot describe in words. Being with Ndidi in that way, there's always such a calm after. A nap follows and then I'm woken up to sweet –smelling egusi soup. That's just the regular drill, special to tour–returns.

Except this day, my lazy hand searched his side of the bed and came up empty.

I checked the time and it was 5am. Ndidi would never let me sleep that long. I stand, robe myself and head into the kitchen. "Ndidi?" My sleepy voice calls out.

I remember entering every room with increasing anxiety. Where did he go? Why didn't he tell me? In hindsight, the funny thing was, I searched both the inside and outside of my fridge for notes. Like he's going to paste it on the ice cream container that has soup inside.

The way I've told this story so far, one would assume Ndidi never leaves. He just sits and waits for me to return. No, the guy had a job. I didn't know what it was, sure, but I know he had one.

Usually he leaves a note if he's not available at the moment.

But, today, there was no note and no Ndidi.

I ran back to the bedroom and searched my thrown-away jeans for my phone. Before I could even place a call to him, my phone vibrated out of my hand. In my state of shock, I watched my phone vibrate, ring and notify me, from my lush pink rug, of what I thought was the beginning of the end of my life. I didn't touch it, as if my body already knew the impending doom and it was saving me from it. Until, my manager's face pops up on the screen.

I hurriedly bend to answer it.

"Akachi, a sextape really?!" Adunni's angry voice bellows at me.

My face scrunches up in confusion. "W-What?"

Noticing my reaction, her face softens and she slaps a hand over her mouth. "Babygirl, I'm so sorry. I'd advise you to put off your phone until I get there. I mean it. I love you, be right there!"

You know the saying, ignorance is bliss? It really is.

My coconut head and I didn't turn my phone off, no.

Nation's hearthrob during the day, escort during the night! Infamous female musician, Akada, surprises fans with filthy ... ~CurrentNaija

"Akada truly cares *only* about her *fans*. Such a privilege to get front row seats to this."
~@Flyboy

"Me, I always say it. You see all these female musicians? Forget about it, it's prostitution they're doing! Most of them cannot even sing sef, if you really check it." ~ @lfeishere

"Just checked her net worth. Now I understand where half of the millions is coming from lol." ~@Victoria

"Why can't women just have sense for God's sake?! Why would you let your boyfriend video you doing such a thing? I can never oh!" ~@Prettyangel94

"Ashawo don dey her eye since abeg." ~@manlikefred

"As a woman, why will you even know some positions? It shows that your body count is probably very high. Omo, this one is a pro in the game jor!" ~@ebenezer

"Who's she again?" ~@kkkkkkkm

I found myself on the rug whenever I woke up from the blackhole of comments I fell into. There were no tears running down my face. However, I remember precisely the searing pain in my chest. Like someone held smoldering metal to that spot from inside. I just kept rubbing on that

spot over and over. As if I could massage the pain to a stop.

That's where I was when Adunni, my manager, burst into my room.

She saw the phone a little bit away from my paralysed left hand and my right hand rubbing vigorously on my left breast. Adunni ran to me and pulled me into a hug that felt like I was hugging a stone.

I was paralysed emotionally too.

My brain refused to think deeper about what this means? It refused, God forbid, to fathom that Nnidi would secretly video us during our intimacy and post it?

So, it sent feeling into my left hand and it grabbed my phone again. Pushing Adunni away, I click on his contact and put the phone to my ear. I kept thinking, of course he's going to call anytime and clear this up. *Of course he's going to call!*

The number you've dialled is switched off. Please try again later.

I kept sitting there and redialing until Adunni grabbed the phone away from my ear and threw it across the room.

"Babygirl, look at me, please." She holds my face in her hands until my lifeless, roaming eyes finally meet hers.

But at this point, my body has started to shudder. My brain cannot push the truth away anymore so the realisation is setting in. My mouth and fingers twitch uncontrollably.

Meanwhile, Adunni was trying to get me to focus. "Babygirl, forget him for now. We need to fix your reputation. Your career is at stake here. If this uproar continues, you will lose important people in your space."

My eyes immediately gain life. I regain strength and send a heavy backhanded slap to her face. "Get out of my house right now! Get out! And don't come back!"

Career? Does this woman really only care about career right now? Who whether people like me or not?

Remember what I said earlier on? As a woman, most times, you get only one chance to prosper and if you don't do your best, you fall off. The comments were just as expected. At the time, my career going down the drain was the least of my problems. But I guess I can't blame Adunni, she's paid to make sure I don't flop. Now, I'm sure she meant well. She was trying to save my bag first, as she should.

But, it was beyond saving. For goodness sake, the media had been itching way before then to take the Nation's *female* sweetheart down. You know, bring her shoulders down a bit. It was sadly inevitable. Adunni left, sorrowful. And I was left alone.

No fans. No Manager. No Ndidi

At the thought of his name, my heart clenched and that's when I let out a roar that, till date, I'm surprised came from me.

Then, I heard the door click. My rage returned.

But it wasn't Adunni. It was my beloved. Ndidi stood in front of me. One thing I cannot forget is the smug smile that rested on his lips and those beautiful eyes that glinted menacingly.

"Hello, my love. How did you enjoy your breakfast in bed?" His voice was not mellow, no. It was rough and coarse and it grated on my eardrums.

I gasped once. Twice. Until, it felt like someone was holding my airway preventing me from breathing. I clutched my neck, struggling.

He stood there and laughed. Loud, boisterous and unfamiliar. So, so unfamiliar.

"You know I've done this before. But, never with celebrities. You were my first try. I was really hesitant at first because I know you celebs always have a guard up. I thought, she might realise. But," he chuckled. "Akachi, you were just too innocent. Or were you? On the second thought..." His smug smile turn to a wide grin. He then imitated a contorted face of passion.

"It's really that easy to break female musicians, isn't it? One video and you're done." That boisterous laugh again. "Nigerians are just so judgemental, jeez!" He put on a face of faux-anger briefly, before bursting out in laughter again.

My brain finally gets it. I've been deceived. I fell in love with an illusion. Ndidi is not a person, he was a character created by this psychopath.

I finally gain my voice. "Why me?"

"Don't feel too special, love, it was random selection. Although, everybody loves Akada! If only they knew how much *she* hated them. After paying her huge sums of money, she comes home and complains about them and how much she hated being famous." The last part is soaked in mockery. He rolled his eyes. "Oh please! Spare me the 'can I be ordinary' theme song! Now you get to taste what it means to be ordinary. Aren't I nice, you ingrate!" He bellows.

As I gazed at this man whom I thought I fell in love with, as I heard his spite-induced words, my resolve kept getting stronger. His words and actions were like a fuel to the simmering liquid at the bottom of my belly.

"You're so encapsulated in yourself, Akachi. Has anybody told you that before? So much so, you didn't notice my clothes were not even hanging on the wardrobe. Even when you sought for me, did you notice? I can bet not. You are so in love with the idea of a solace where you can go and dump your feelings. It's sad that I have to give you this life lessons like this, woman, but it had to

be done. Because this is what happens when you hype a lady up too much, she makes a horse out of it and sits upon it like a 'queen'."

He took a walk around the room and he touches picture frames of us together, caresses the bed and breathes in the space. The bed stood between us. Funny. "I'm going to miss this place."

The liquid had started boiling, strong and loud. "What did you gain?" I ask.

He burst into laughter. My eardrums ache. "One, for fun. It was so nice to put my behavioural psychology degree to good use. Two, check your bank balance and ask me again." He chuckled again.

My eyes widened. I grabbed my phone and I see it. Amidst the notification was my bank balance of just a 100 thousand naira. Thankfully, it was one of my banks. The amateur idiot.

"I left something in there for you to be feeding. I know, I know, kindness doesn't come easy to everyone. Advice for next time, don't tell anyone details of your finances. It's just stupid, I don't care if you're in *love*."

I could practically hear the sound of the thing in belly now. He should have heard too. He really should have.

"Is this how you are able to walk into my estate and have lunches with my kind? Is this your pathetic job?" My tone is condescending now. "Oh, you poor, poor wretch. How does it feel to have more than a million Naira in your bank account? Wait, could this be the first time ever?" I cackled.

His face burned red with anger. He balled his hand into a fist. Meanwhile, my hand went directly to the drawer under my bed where I place my safety-knife. My heart beat fast, but not in fear. In anticipation. I leave my hand holding the knife under the bed.

"You've got a mouth on you. Trust me, I know enough about it." he smirked.

I roll my eyes. "Poor *and weak*? How have you been surviving, boy?"

The switch I was waiting for finally happens. He walks menacingly towards me, eyes on fire.

"I didn't plan to touch you. This, is your fault. You haven't still learned your lesson I see."

As he pounces, I plunged. And twisted. I watched in satisfaction as his face contorts into one of disbelief, then agony.

Then, I pushed him off me, grabbed my phone and called Adunni. "You wanted to do damage control? Now, you can."

Maybe I'm like every typical rich person: selfish, whiny about their own wealth, and delusional.

But all I did was love.

And that's not a crime.

Murder is though.

Thank God, I'm rich.

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