

I hate my job.

I didn't know turning 38 would come with a wide range of aches in places I had little knowledge of.

I lay in bed, staring at the faded ceiling above and the dusty fan that hung leisurely beneath it.

I sighed lazily, yawned loudly and sang to myself,

“happy birthday to me”

“I wish I can go back to when I was eighteen”

I sat up and walked to the mirror to assess my face, it was a regular ritual I fostered.

Better to count my varicose veins and eyebags myself.

I saw a pimple and I leaned in closer to the mirror.

I danced and rejoiced at the mirage of youthfulness.

Call me delusional,

But, it's not you that spent half of your lifetime toiling away endlessly to cater for yourself and your family.

Thankfully I was an only child.

I imagined having siblings to ask me for urgent 2k in this economy.

My phone rang and I glanced towards it.

It was my co-worker from the office.

I took a deep breath, shook my head rhythmically to the tune, and began to sing and dance along.

Afro beats is indeed medicine for the soul.

The phone stopped ringing and I plopped down on the bed.

I looked around to assess the sorry state of my abode.

My personal effects were strewn across the floor leaving tiny bare patches to step on.

My expensive satin shirt lay on the cold tile floor around the corner.

I had not completed the payment for the shirt.

"my love"

I spoke to the shirt as I picked it up.

"what are you doing on the floor ma cherrie"

I asked, kissing it softly.

Some other casual clothes were lying around.

I looked towards the sitting room door a few paces ahead. It was in a sorrier state.

I had enough on my plate,

Why was "Joy Front Desk" calling?

I lay the satin shirt on the bed, picked up my other clothes, arranged them in the cupboard and began to make the bed.

I flapped the corners of the sheets. My satin shirt disappeared.

"Hei! My satin shirt oh!"

I couldn't find it.

The phone rang again amidst my frantic search in my disorganized room.

"Ooooooooooooooh, Ah!"

I grumbled.

I picked up the phone and the caller ID read

"Oga"

I immediately answered the call without any hesitation.

"Good morning sir"

"Yes"

"Ah, no sir, I'm not feeling well."

"Yes sir"

"Thank you"

I hung up and swore silently.

I wasn't even sent a "happy birthday email" yet they want me to come in on my day off.

I walked briskly to the other side of the bed to look for the shirt but didn't notice it on the floor till I slid on it and was elevated dramatically in the air...

I saw my life flash by as fell back to the earth.

I heard a crack as my head hit the bed frame and I drifted into unconsciousness.

The sound of voices laughing and running feet could be heard in the distance.

Was I in heaven?

Was I going to die a poor virgin recluse

Was I-

"Hello Teacher!"

A voice echoed loudly above my head

I opened my eyes and I looked up to see a blurry face staring down at me.

"Are you alright?"

The voice asked.

This voice sounded very familiar,

Where had I heard that voice?

The blurry face began to come into focus and my eyes widened as I saw the face of an 18-year-old who looked like me in my teenage years.

I let out a blood-curdling scream which made the student wince in shock.

"What happened?"

"Where am I?"

"Why is there an 18-year-old version of me running towards the school building?"

I looked at the few students who had gathered and the teachers who tried to disperse them.

A man ran towards me, motioning to the student to leave.

"Are you fine? You fell and that student came to check on you"

I looked at the security guard, I did not recognize him.

"I- I fell?"

"Yes, you were running to your office."

He helped me up and I brushed the sand off my clothes, while the teachers around dispersed the crowd quickly.

I assessed my body, there was no bruise,

My wish was granted. I went back to twenty years ago.

I tried to recall my life from around then in high school when I was to decide on my course of study for admission into the university.

I had opted out of admission counselling.

Maybe my current hamster-on-a-wheel, unfulfilling job was the repercussion of my inaction.

I went twenty years back in time!

I grinned happily. Time to make a change.

I asked the man politely,

"Is that student the first student for admission counselling?"

The man looked at me strangely.

"The student was already on the way to your office before you fell."

I smiled.

So I wasn't in heaven

I was in some kind of purgatory to amend the deed or misdeed of my nonchalance towards my future ambition.

"Are you sure you're fi-"

"Yes, thank you!"

I dashed off leaving the security officer to stare at my retreating figure.

This was my old school.

I knew where the counselling area was.

I ran into the unfamiliar office and met myself sitting patiently and reading.

The walk clock in the corner showed the time was 8:50 a.m.

We stared at each other briefly.

I walked to my younger self and snatched the book away.

There was a dramatic pause before I started.

"I know you saved up a huge amount of money in your Kolo savings."

"I need you to invest that money."

My younger self looked at me strangely.

It was a mix of bewilderment, shock and what might have been amusement.

"I came to ask about this course"

My younger self stated, ignoring my statement completely, pointing to the brochure in my hand.

"It's what I've chosen to do-"

"You will do well in this field and hate every bit of it."

I replied instantly.

"God forbid"

My younger self said glaring at me.

"Look Teacher, with all due respect, I think the fall might have been severe"

"You don't understand! You need to-"

I stopped mid sentence and looked at my unbelieving other self and exhaled.

"I am from the fu-"

I stopped in my tracks,

"I am your guardian angel"

I said playing the religious card.

There was another dramatic silence.

"You might need to see a doctor"

My younger self stood up to leave.

"You have a birthmark in the middle of your head."

"You hate dogs because you were once attacked by a dog"

"You hate being alone even though you're used to it-"

"and think where did I just appear from, have you seen me before now?"

"Let's say I believe you, why are you here, telling me all this"

I was interrupted by the curiosity I knew myself all too well for.

"I'm here because of this!"

I pointed at the textbook.

"Do not, I repeat, do not study this."

My younger self looked at me suddenly with shock written on their face.

"What is it? I asked,"

"Nothing"

My younger self looked at me from my face to my feet and sat down with a more serious attitude.

"So what should I study?"

"I-I well, I don't know-"

"Okay, we're done here-"

My younger self made to leave again.

"Wait."

"Like I said invest all that money into this company"

I took a pen and paper from the desk and scribbled a name.

"The company won't exist for the next two years"

"Do that and study something you want to study"

"I do like this-"

"You're doing this to please our- your parents"

Another deafening silence ensued.

"You've got to do what you like"

"Promise me"

With a deep sigh,

my younger self looked at me once more and broke down in tears.

I held my hand over my mouth, I felt like I was making things worse.

The clock rang and I looked at my hands and almost fainted.

"You have been slowly disappearing"

I was told dryly in between sobs.

I held in the urge to scream, I knew I was about to leave this reality.

"I am confused and scared"

I was also feeling the same way, everything was happening too fast.

"Hey"

I went in for a hug

"We, I mean you will be fine"

"Promise me you will do as I asked, promise me"

"I promise."

My younger self said as I felt a force lift me into nothingness

I opened my eyes and there I lay with the satin scarf crumpled into a horrid mess at my feet.

My reality had also changed.

I could not wait to find out if my younger self did as I asked.

I ran to my phone to discover my new reality.