

Ife woke up one Monday morning, wrapped in his old sheets. He knew this because he was roused by a scent that only existed in tandem with the angst and bad decisions that governed the first years of his twenties.

The scent was a perfume of Arabian persuasion, a gift from his girlfriend at that time, Desola. At the time, he was convinced he would marry her, and when he received this gift, he made sure to spray a bit on his sheets every week, as a reminder that she cared and he loved her; a sort of olfactory cuddle.

A little over a decade had passed since he had smelt that, and in that time, he had broken up with her, burned his sheets--- crying as the flames licked the fabric in the open space situated behind his apartment--- and he had failed at various ventures, like all humans fresh out of school do.

Yet, the scent was overpowering and as he slid out of bed, the sun's rays coming through the window, he realized, truly, that the sheets had somehow survived the fires that day in October—12 years before—as he bawled comforted by rapidly emerging loneliness and a misplaced sense of betrayal.

The room lay as he had left it the night before in search of better things in the land of dreams, but he felt...unsettled.

The unease of being wrapped in sheets that shouldn't exist, an anachronistic nightmare of epic proportions. Ghosts weren't entertained, they were bind and cast, and, sent back to the depths of hell. There were no Caspers, friendly and full of wonder, there were village people, snakes disguised as friends, witches with personal vendettas. Such was the lore of the Nigerian experience.

He ate quickly, mind running through the impossible possibilities, spoon scooping to mouth the microwave-heated jollof rice from the previous day. His radio spat judgment, opinion and chord progression over and over as he worked through his breakfast. Mondays were bad enough without trying to go through them with hunger in the unholy mix of presentations and deadlines for the previous week's tasks.

Up next, his favorite music show was starting, and it was the final step in his morning routine; listening to the veteran DJ, DJ Chronos as he dished out the latest tunes over radio frequencies.

*Welcome to Monday Morning Motivation, where we play you all the latest new jams released in the last week. First off, we have a new release from the promising artiste Davido, Dami Duro.*

Ife jerked his head towards the radio, spoon clattering onto his plate.

*I enjoyed his last release, Ekuro, so I'm pretty sure this one will be a hit too.*

*Davido, Dami Duro.*

The song came on, as Ife's understanding of the world came down.

Unease had blossomed into pure panic and he wondered aloud why a song that was released 12 years before and had effectively pushed the career of one of the most successful artistes in Nigeria was being called a new release.

“Who calls Davido promising?”

He realized that he had not seen his phone all morning and he went in search of it, hoping to confirm what the date was and prove that he was in fact sane.

He did not find it.

What he did find was an Arik Airways Calendar.

The year read 2011.

“What the hell?”

Arms raised above head, legs losing balance as he slid to the floor, he realized that he had been transported back in time. He pinched himself to make sure that he wasn't dreaming and the pain the action registered proved that Morpheus was no spinner of this tale.

He gazed back at the calendar, a date circled, October 31<sup>st</sup>.

This is something out of a sci-fi film, he thought, frozen in that pleading posture on the floor of his bedroom. He had questions but no one to direct them at.

Was this a well staged prank by friends? (he had no friends)

Why was he still in the apartment he paid rent for in Gbagada in 2023?

Why wasn't he the age he was in 2011?

Was his younger self still here?

Who sent him back? Was it even possible to send someone back?

Why did the person who sent him back also transport the rice he had cooked back in 2023?

He rolled over convinced that this had to be a prank. He turned his apartment over searching for his phone, his connection to the real world, the thing that'd give him the needed digital information to free himself of this preposterous state of affairs.

Missing in action.

He went back to the living room, and attempted to connect the television set he had bought when he moved in but barely used it after that. He had no phone to pay for his satellite TV connection, so he contented himself in finding local stations, trying to find a good signal.

A news station came on.

*Good morning and welcome to the newspaper corner. Today, 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2011, we have the punch, the daily trust ...."*

The news trailed off into the background as he realized that he was truly back in the past. An anachronism himself.

"What do the sci-fi characters do first?", he asked himself.

They made sure to avoid their younger selves to prevent a break of the time-space continuum, while evading those who sought to set the time continuum straight. They had missions, he had none. They changed the past for their selfish interests, he---

It came to him suddenly. October 31<sup>st</sup>. The day circled in red on the calendar.

The mission emerged. He had lost his girlfriend on that day, but that was not what emerged, clear as day.

He had also come into his first big paycheck and he had spent the next few months digging a financial hole that had spiraled into the life he lived now, depression over the breakup too strong for him to overcome.

Over the years, he had thought and thought about that period in his life, going over the “what ifs” and “could I have’s”. He now had a chance to set things straight. All he needed to do was break the first rule of sci-fi lore: find himself. And, he knew where to find his young sniveling, whimpering self.

Ife dressed up quickly---shirt and trouser finding rhythm, planted above his shoes--- and headed for the Kokoviis Park in Central Adohi, where his younger self had been broken up with that morning, and where he would find him with eyes red and jaw wide-open.

He wondered about the thread that Fate had moved for him to get there and he thanked whichever gods and deities had seen him fit to bless with a second chance. A chance at financial freedom. Crypto, NFTs, he could have them all. He could even stop his younger self from getting into that MMM pyramid scheme. All he needed to do was tell him without him knowing who he was.

Once at the park, Ife spotted him quickly, seated at a bench facing the new billboard stand under construction. He cringed at what he found fashionable then; three-quarter jean shorts, blue high-tops, truly a different time.

“Hello”, he said, as he sat.

“Who are you?” Ife the Younger asked, voice barely above a whisper.

Ife stared down his younger self, no doubt trying to grasp the realities of the breakup.

“It's funny how things all work out in a sense.”

“Yeah...”

“I think about life as you win some and you lose some.”

“of course,” Ife the Younger, eyes searching for the point of the interaction.

“I got some information from Iyanu.”

Iyanu was a successful childhood friend and if there was anyone that Ife would take advice from, it was him.

“You are from Iyanu?”the Younger asked, as his present worries disappeared.

“Yeah, I work with him. He speaks highly of you and he has asked me to give you this in for finances. The world is changing Ife, and we must change with it.”

“Hmm, okayyyy? Why couldn't he call me? I haven't been able to reach him in a year.”

“Well, I haven't been able to reach him in 13 years, but my words will become his,” Ife the Older thought to himself.

“No need to worry, he wants you to do three things, put a few thousand naira in a cryptocurrency called Bitcoin. Not too much, just enough to buy 500 bitcoins. Then, invest in a company going public called LinkedIn, and third, don't put any money in the MMM scheme.”

Ife looked at his younger self, hoping that he'd take the advice.

“I don't know about this, but if Iyanu thinks these are good plans, then I'm sold.”

Ife the Older repeated the instructions again, and Ife the Older shook Younger firmly, leaving him to his devices.

As Ife walked away, satisfied, his missing phone rang, in his pocket.

