

# *School Diaries*

E P I S O D E O N E

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# *First Day...*

“CALM DOWN LOVE, you’ll be fine” My mum said, holding my hand as we walked towards the reception. My heart started beating faster as we approached, not because of the buttoned up shirt I had on which was almost too perfect a fit, nor my shoulder length braids that were packed tightly all the way up and made my forehead look like a mirror. It was every other thing. Who would I meet there? How different would it be from primary school? How exactly

would I cope without my mum being there everyday after school? “Are you sure?” I replied to my mum, but she just squeezed my hand in reassurance.

We walked through a short aisle of well trimmed yellow hibiscus bushes that led us to the reception. The double sided doors were unusually long and made of transparent glass with aluminium trimmings. Thankfully they opened as soon as we approached. The reception itself was big, not as big as the fancy hotel ones, but bigger than I expected from a school. Walking into the reception, I was welcomed by a fresh breeze of flowery scent and panic. I quickly noticed the walls were coated in pale pink satin paint and decorated with cardboard posters of positive quotes and girl power statements. The white high ceiling above had the traditional POP carvings which I thought were too basic. I could already feel some goosebumps growing on my skin from

the two standing air conditioners. It felt like the temperatures were deliberately set to the lowest so that people don't spend too long in the reception.

It was somewhat surprising to see a lot of girls in that room who looked a lot like me. Some tall girls with jumped up trousers and other bigger girls swimming in shirts twice their actual size. As I continue to inspect the reception and all the moving pieces around, I'm abruptly interrupted by a voice from behind me. "Little madam, are you part of us?" I turned around to see a dark short older woman wearing thin glasses with her hair tied to the back in a small bun. She was about my height, which was amusing, but looked like she was no one to mess with. She moved quickly. "Good morning ma, You must be Mrs Joan." My mum comes in between us, greeting her. "Yes that's me, but you can call me Mrs J" she said then turned to wink at me. I smiled

to return her funny gesture, even though it wasn't really funny to me.

I looked around more and noticed a group of girls in the corner. They were much bigger than me and by the look of their uniforms, it also looked like they had been in the school for longer. I silently hoped they weren't in my grade nor my hostel. They caught me staring at them then started talking to each other. My slow self didn't think to look away until one of them said out loud enough for me to hear "Who is this orobo staring at?" They started laughing, which made me feel extremely uncomfortable. I didn't try looking up again from the floor until my mum hugged and kissed me goodbye and I watched her walk out the door of the reception. I felt tears erupt from my eyes, but I couldn't do anything about it. This journey has officially begun .

I dragged all my belongings to the room I assumed Mrs J directed me to. I was scared

from the thought that I would run into those bigger looking girls again so I didn't bother going back to the reception to confirm. I walked straight down and stumbled on two long hallways on the left and right, then I turned left instinctively to see tall doors on opposite sides of the hallway.

As I stood in front of the door that led into my room, I took a deep breath and turned the handle. I opened the door and shut it as quickly because I recognized the voices that were giggling and laughing from inside. They were the older girls from the reception. The same ones I was hoping not to run into.

"Who is that?" "My friend, will you come back!" "If we catch you ehn." I heard from the door. I didn't think twice this time before I picked my feet. I ran as fast as I could while dragging my box and really hoping none of them saw my face. I returned to the reception and followed Mrs J's lead, this time to my actual room. "Don't worry,



you'll be okay," she said, as if reading my mind. From outside, I could hear people chatting away and wondered how they could have already bonded. "Didn't we all just arrive today?" I thought to myself. Well, I concluded that they met each other a few hours before I came so technically, they're closer, for now. Opening the room door and seeing girls my age gave me so much relief "Finally!" I murmured to myself.

I walked inside with a little smile on my face but too terrified to say words. I felt their eyes follow me as I dragged my box over to the empty bed by the window. The giggles didn't completely stop but it was obvious they paid more attention to me and I didn't like that. One of them finally said "Hi, what's your name?" with the prettiest smile on her face.

3 hours after the introduction and a bit of talking, someone barged through the door... a group of people actually. All of us seated

in our little gist circle stood up quickly to see this bunch of older girls enter our room. “Oya all of you line up let’s see your faces” These were the same reception girls who I had mistakenly entered their room some hours ago.

We quickly responded, some of us looking straight down to the floor. All of us in fact, except me. I was gazing at one of them at the back. There was a small spider on her shoulder that kept crawling up her shirt, but I couldn’t open my mouth to tell her. I continued staring till one of them called me by my new name “Orobo, who are you looking at?” I turned my focus to her now as she looked at me with such disgust. She seemed like the leader of whatever their group was. “Why is she always staring? Does she have eye problems?” The other girls laughed. “Why do you actually stare? Are you mocking us?” The leader says. “I think she is oh. She thinks she’s bad” one

of the other girls added.

They gave me no chance to even answer any of their questions. They just kept throwing questions and backhanded comments towards me. “See eh, be careful. If you mess with one of us, any jss3 girl, you mess with all of us. See you all at the initiation, especially you Orobo” The leader finally said before leading the herd out of the room.

“Sorry” one of my roommates said to me. I didn’t know how to feel. It had been less than 24 hours since I entered the school and I already had a really bad feeling about those girls and when they would end their terror. Most of all, I was scared of whatever this ‘initiation’ was or what we would need to do to get initiated.

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“Jss1 girls, you may leave the hostel for dinner” Mrs J announced. My room had

been quiet since the senior girls barged in and I wondered how SS3 girls would be if those were merely JSS 3 girls. I made sure I had my handkerchief and big plastic cup with me along with my Vaseline and a brushed hairline before leaving. We left our room quietly into the hallway and blended into another crowd of girls coming from other rooms. We were quite a lot.

“Jesus is the sweetest name I know oooooh” our house-parent, Mrs J, sang in a raspy cracking voice as she led us into the dining hall. Some of us tried not to laugh at the sound of her voice, but we couldn’t hold it. “Ehennn you people are making fun of my singing abi? Don’t worry, you’ll sing for us during your initiation” she said laughing to herself. Not this initiation conversation again. All of us stopped laughing immediately for fear of what was to come.

We finally entered the huge dining hall. It looked impressive and was divided into

two big halls that could possibly contain thousands of students. We were led to a section with white tables and black chairs neatly arranged in two straight columns of almost 10 rows. The first 5 rows on the two columns were taken up by boys, possibly the ones in my year group since they all looked small and chubby. Before I knew it, while I was still looking around the dining hall, my set girls had gone ahead to sit, leaving myself and another girl on a table to ourselves. It was weird and awkward seeing two girls sitting alone on a table that could take 8 people.

I looked at the girl sitting in front of me, she wore a big house-wear shirt, small pink glasses and black ropes attached to it. It looked like girls wearing shirts bigger than their actual size was a sight I would get used to seeing. "Hello, what's your name?" I said, finally getting the courage to talk "A.. Amanda" she replied stuttering. She was

as shy as me. "How old are you?" I asked again "ten... by next month" she replied. I tried to cover my shock at how I'm 2 years older than this girl in my set. "Did you skip?" I asked. She nodded. No wonder she was so shy and little. She wasn't even supposed to be here in the first place.

"Everyone should be quiet" A very tall dark skinned boy shouted in the middle of the dining hall. "Say amen. For the food we are about to receive, we thank you oh Lord." A huge response from the rest of the dining hall followed "Amen!" I watched the boy go back to his seating area, which was at the other side of the dining hall, a section which was much more packed than ours. "That's the senior side" Amanda said. "How'd you know?" I asked, confused. "I have an older brother there. He is in ss1."

"Go get you food" Mrs J said pointing across the hall with a sign reading 'Serving point 1' at the top. Amanda and I walked towards

the serving point, passing a lot of the boys tables. I tried not to walk weird or make eye contact with any of them. Amanda on the other hand just looked straight down to the floor. We got to the serving point and joined the line with the rest of the girls from other tables. “Oh my gosh he’s so fine” “Eww look at that ugly boy” “Please why is that fat boy in our set?” They giggled to each other as they pointed to the boys tables. I just looked on, still marvelling at how a lot of them already formed friendships in less than a day.

When it got to my turn on the line, I stared at the variety of foods displayed behind the glass. The smell of it already tickled my nose as I gazed on fried rice, Jollof rice and Jollof spaghetti. I was stuck with deciding which of the options to choose from but the server didn’t seem to have the patience to allow me think it through. “Aunty pick what you want and go now, ki

lo de?" I quickly indicated interest in Jollof rice because it's the default for me. You can never go wrong with Jollof.

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I stared back at my barely touched plate of Jollof rice as I walked up to the stacking point to trash it. I was wrong about this Jollof. It was tasteless. I wished I had picked any of the other options. The table with Amanda was really quiet, mostly because neither one of us wanted to start a convo. We just stared at our food the whole time and looked at the graffiti probably drawn by students. To be honest, time goes really slows when you're eating alone or with someone in front of you who doesn't speak. I hoped it wouldn't go on like that forever. "

JSS1 girls, line up" A tall girl shouted. Amanda and I, with the rest of our set girls followed her in a single row out of the dining hall and back into the hostel but instead of our



rooms, we were led through another big door with the sign reading “JSS3 prep hall”. It was simply one of the biggest rooms I’d seen. It was empty except for curtains and a big black speaker positioned at the corner of the room.

We were gestured to sit at the back of the room, on the floor facing the rest of the hall. “Do you have any idea what is going to happen?” Amanda asked me with a shaky voice. She always sounded like a ghost was chasing her. “It’s probably initiation” A girl behind us replied, then interjects herself into the conversation. “They’ll probably tell us to do something crazy like run around the hostel singing” she laughed. Her laughter didn’t sound cute at all. She sounded like a horse, but I smiled at her in an attempt not to let my face betray my thoughts. “Tell me you’re joking” I asked and really wished that whatever she said was just made up because I could see Amanda’s slowly disappearing

facial colour, like she was going to faint soon. “Maybe, maybe not. Let’s find out” she shrugged. “What’s your name by the way?” I asked, turning forward to see girls from other sets flood the prep hall. “Tife” she replied, looking in the direction my eyes were focused. “Omo!” Tife exclaimed to herself but loud enough for us to know she was as shocked as we were.

“Everyone should settle down.” The same girl that led us there said. “Good evening girls and welcome to junior girls initiation” she announced while everyone clapped. “For those who don’t know, the jss1 especially, my name is Obi, and I’m the head girl of this school” Everyone clapped again. “For the opening prayer I would like to call on...” she said while scanning the room with her eyes. She looked at my direction and pointed towards me as my heart starts beating really fast and my blood rushing up and down. Only for her to say “Girl in pink

glasses come and pray.” She gestured for Amanda to come out. It was at this point that I released a sigh of relief. Thank God it wasn’t me.

I watched how Amanda slowly got up and walked towards the middle of the hall so wobbly. She was shaking so much you could see it from afar and I was genuinely scared for her. “In.. In.. Je.. Jesus.. In Jesus name” she spoke softly. “We can’t hear you” someone from the other side of the hall shouted, causing some people to snicker. Amanda repeated herself loudly. Her prayer was very short but also very long because of her stammering. “She’s a wreck” Tife whispers to me. I couldn’t agree more.

“Thank you. Now let’s get into the main event” Obi the head girl said as Amanda walked back to her seat still shaking and wobbling. “Good job” I whispered to her as she sat down. She just nodded. We both knew she couldn’t open her mouth after

what just happened. “If you didn’t know, we are having initiation for the newcomers” Obi continued speaking, pointing to our side. “JSS1 what we’re doing is simple. You will come out to the middle in threes and flip a coin one after the other. If you get heads, you sing, if you get tails, you dance. You get to pick a song to sing, but for dancing you freestyle to whatever we play for you. Understood?” She said with a wide smile on her face.

My tummy started to rumble. This was the initiation everyone had been talking about. I looked across the hall to see all the girls then make eye contact with those mean girls. “Oh no” I murmured to myself. “Okay! Who are the first three?” The head girl asked then looked at my direction again and smiled.