

School Diaries

E P I S O D E T W O

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Initiation

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 jss3 girls. “Oh no” I murmured to myself.

“Okay! Who are the first three?” the head girl asked then looked at my direction and smiled. I ducked my head to avoid her picking me but it didn’t work this time. “You, you and pink glasses come out” she said, gesturing for Tife, Amanda and I to get up.

A burst of applause began as we shyly came out of our sitting area. I couldn't even blame Amanda. This looked like a concert stage. The hall suddenly felt three times bigger as we approached the middle of everyone. "Tell us your names and flip the coin" Obi said promptly as she sat facing us, with what seemed like the rest of her set mates. "I'm Tife, her name is Amanda and her name is..." "Temi" I replied to Tife. "Busy-body, did they ask you to talk for them?" A girl sitting next to the head girl sneered. "Leave them abeg. Just flip the coin," Obi's friend interjected.

Tife collected the coin from Obi's hand and flipped it. I couldn't help but think of how I got to the point where my reputation in the school relied on a coin flip. Imagine! I couldn't dance and definitely couldn't sing. I really didn't have any good options on my plate and could only hope nothing bad happened. I turned to my left to see the

Three girls snickering and I half expected them to shout “Orobo” while I was coming out. “It’s tails” Tife said out to the hearing of everyone... Immediately after that, music started playing loudly on the speaker. I’m not sure what song it was but the beats were so loud and hard, I felt it in my bones. It was the kind of beats you hear in African house parties.

I am terrible at dancing. In fact if I am held at gunpoint and the only way I could save myself was to freestyle to an afrobeat song, my parents had better start planning my funeral. I’m horrible at it. I’ve wondered if I ever got the African genes at all to dance, because every African is meant to at least know how to do one dance properly. It’s an unspoken rule.

While I was still thinking the other two girls next to me were in the same situation as I, Tife started her leg work... on beat. Cheer sounds of “Ayee” and “Woo-hoo” started

from every corner of the hall. Everyone was impressed. I didn't feel bad as much because Amanda and I were standing still, Until out of nowhere, Amanda started. She started dancing Shaku Shaku. This same girl who I thought couldn't hurt a fly was dancing like she was accustomed to stage life. Even more cheers came from the crowd. "Omo, na only you dey o" someone from my left teased.

I didn't feel so bad because I knew I couldn't dance. I'd embarrass myself and become the laughing stock for an incredibly long time. But I already felt a bit embarrassed because the two other girls beside me were dancing but me. I looked weird just standing still, so I did what I do at every party. In any birthday party when they force me out to the circle, or the christmas parties when my mum begs me to go out and dance with my cousins to get 100 naira, I do the church dance - Feet left to right

and hands swaying into the corresponding leg. At least that was much better than just standing there looking like a twig.

“Ewo!” exclaimed someone from the crowd and everyone around the area started laughing. Before I felt bad, a louder round of applause and cheer came from every corner of the room. “Temi!...Temi!...Temi!” They start to chant. I’m in an euphoric state now. We continued for about a minute before the music stopped. They clapped and cheered again as we walked back to our seats. It felt like a disney movie, when towards the end, there’s this dance break for the main characters. Basically we walked back to our seat with the biggest smiles on our faces. It wasn’t that bad afterall.

“You danced really well” “That was so nice” my set girls told the three of us as we sat down. “So you can dance like that?” I whisper to Amanda as she smiled then shrugged. “This girl is unpredictable“ I thought to myself.

“That was so fun, right?” I said to Tife and Amanda as we walked back to our separate rooms with the rest of the girls. ”I thought it was going to be one scary thing like this” Amanda said softly. “It was scary for some people oh. Don’t you remember that girl who almost cried when they told her to sing?” Tife giggled. “Or the girl who rolled her eyes when one of the seniors told her to move forward” “That girl is in soup” I responded, thinking of how much guts she had to look at them then roll her eyes.

Right before we entered our rooms Mrs J yelled, “Where are you people going to? You will not pray before you sleep?” All of us stopped and stood outside confused. “My girls please let’s start night devotion before you get ready for bed.” She goes to the middle of the quadrangle and starts clapping. “Follow my lead.” We clapped in sync with her rhythm. “Do any of you know any praise songs?” She asked but no one

responded.. I knew some other people there definitely knew some songs but were too scared to bring one up, including me. “You people no dey go church for una house?” Mrs J asked rhetorically, switching accents to a more Nigerian tone. All of us still stared at her prompting her to start singing. “Repeat after me” she said.

About 20 minutes later, we ended our devotion and tried to enter our rooms but were held again by Mrs J. “Wait behind girls. I’m going to read out the agenda for tomorrow, including what you need to get ready for school. I believe they have already explained everything during the orientation but we’ll briefly go through it again to refresh your minds.” I wasn’t around for the orientation so this was good for me. I tried as much as I could to listen to her talk throughout the speech but it was so hard to follow. She sometimes dragged her words, or was slow with it.

My legs started to hurt from standing for so long and we were held longer because people kept asking the most silly questions, even after she answered some of them already. My head hurt from a few of the questions that came from some people's mouths, especially one girl in a unicorn onesie who asked the most silly questions in a baby's voice like she was cute or something. She had two friends who laughed every time she raised her hand. They probably knew each other from somewhere before here. I rolled my eyes at them once and one of them saw me. Seconds later I felt three big bug eyes staring at me like they had something to say, apart from their dumb questions.

It was finally over after 30 whole minutes of standing and listening to an old woman and a slow unicorn. My roommates on the other hand started chattering immediately we entered the room. "I can't believe we're

already going to school, can't they let us rest?" "Imagine how many people are in school." "I need to get all my stuff ready." "Let's do it together."

They sounded either too excited or scared. I on the other hand was just hoping that I don't run into those jss3 girls who keep calling me Orobo. But after that evening, I felt they'd have a different approach to me, since THEY cheered for me. I went over to my wardrobe to set aside my school outfit from head to toe. I had only brought out the shirt, skirt and tie when I turned around and saw my roommates bring out everything down to the underwear and shoe polish. Feeling a little unaccomplished, I did the same. I even put the panty liner on my underwear and hung it along with my blazer in front of my wardrobe like the girl next to me. "Turn off your lights now" our house-parent announced in the hallway right after the bell rang.

We do as told and go to our beds. Not up to 10 seconds into lights out, the girl across the room turned on the brightest light at her corner. “What even is that?” I was slightly annoyed and hoped she wasn’t being serious. “It’s my night light,” she said quickly, then tucked herself into her duvet, leaving the rest of us wondering if she was alright. “Ada please your light is too bright, could you turn it off or down?” Another girl across the room finally said it. “Umm no, I can’t. I can’t sleep with the lights completely off or slightly off. It’s scary.” Ada replied, “Are you alright? My friend, will you turn off that thing! Who is going to bite you tonight?” The girl next to me snapped. I giggled, causing other girls in my room to laugh.

“No I can’t please I...” before Adaeze could finish her sentence, the girl next to me stood up and left the room. Everyone went dead silent. Minutes later she came back with the house-parent. “Please Adaeze,

turn off your light, you are disturbing other people's sleep." Mrs J said. After a few back and forth of begging, Mrs J finally allowed her to use the lamp but just for that night. The girl that stayed next to me hissed and walked back to her bed annoyed. "Such a baby" she murmured to herself but loud enough for Adaeze to hear it.

When she got back to her bed, I asked for her name with the aim of starting a conversation that might calm her down. "Hi, what's your name? My name is Temi and..." "My name is Oreoluwa Ibukunoluwa Okafor and I'm going to sleep. Goodnight Temi" she interjected rudely, before burying her head under her blanket. "This one has a serious attitude" I said to myself, still dazed at what just happened.

I turned towards the other side of my bed which was facing the window so I could see the moonlight sparkling high up in the dark sky. I stared up at it for so long, hoping I

could fall asleep but I gave in and chose to do something else. I picked up my notebook and decided to turn it into a diary. “It will be fun and cute” I think to myself. Thanks to Adaeze’s sunshine, I was able to write about the whole of that day in my book. I laughed at myself when I wrote the words “Dear diary,” like I was one of those disney teen girls.