

**Excerpt: Just Another Journey.**

**2006 - Benin City, Nigeria.**

Bayo sits like a perfectly created statue as he listens intently to Josie. Skin so smooth, moisturized, and richly dark with every muscle defined all so perfectly. It almost seemed like a missed opportunity, not being a model. He had a sense of style, he loved looking polished, smelling masculine, just like the movie stars. He didn't mind spending a fortune from his barely available savings to look good, he loved it. He also loved creative minds and this lady in front of him was no exception. She was incredibly gorgeous in her barely-there makeup, thick hair, and... Jesus! Time to focus! She's being very detailed about this for chrissake. He continues to nod, listening attentively as she goes on in full detail about her expectations. He is lost in her ideas and imagination. He smiles all so slightly at the team they could become. Satisfied, Josie clears her throat gently as she sits back on her chair, arms folded.

“So, what do you think?”

“Everything sounds perfect... doable... possibly doable, I think we can make it happen.”

“We have to.”

“Of course.”

“I am serious. I need to know you are in to make this happen?!”

“I am if you are.”

They stare at each other briefly. Josie gets a bit flustered, why is this happening, it's getting a bit hot, weird. Josie breaks the silence.

“Alright. Well, I brought some outfits, maybe we can go over them and see which to start with?”

“Sure.” He follows her lead as she empties the bag of clothes on the floor. He ponders on conversation starters.

“Which school did you finish from?”

“Benistophus.”

“Ahhh, Isn’t that the school with the girl that was possessed? What’s her name again...Ummm --”

“Cassy. Cassy Jones.”

“Right.” *Good job Bayo, can’t even remember the name. Great.*

“Yea, it was at the time when I was wrapping up so I didn’t pay much attention.”

“Were you there when it happened? The fall?”

“No... I already graduated... I believe it was about a month after or thereabout... It was terrible, she... I don’t know.”

“Do you believe it? Was she hunted by the witch?” Bayo regrets instantly as he sees this being the wrong direction of the conversation. Josie is very uncomfortable.

“I don’t like to dwell on the spiritual. Whether I do or not, it happened, there are rumors and now, she’s hopefully at peace. I just believe we all have our demons we battle daily... some are just more physical than others.”

“True... You are right. I’m sorry, this is not the right topic for this occasion.”

“It’s okay. I get that from time to time. People normally rise to the occasion once they hear I went to the school.” She continues with her clothing choices. Bayo studies the entire collection of clothes.

“The black dress.”

Josie picks up a black dress. “This one?” She holds up a maxi black dress with long sleeves.

“Yes. I like how long it is.”

“It covers everything.”

“Exactly.”

Josie looks at him puzzled.

“It gives you all the opportunity to work the camera. You said you need the audience to notice you, right?”

“Right...”

“So, draw them in with your eyes, your face, your presence. This will present sort of a mystifying illusion, which may lead to some form of inquisition. In return, you also present length and elegance.”

Josie, although not entirely sure she understood what that meant, decided to agree with it all. He was the photographer after all...good with words too.

“Okay... I like it.”

“Good! That will be one thousand Naira for the session!”

“Say wetin happen!”

Bayo is taken aback. She’s feisty, he likes it. “Wow, didn’t see that coming.”

“Well, e don come and it’s going nowhere. Two hundred Naira and that’s it.”

“For how many clothes?!”

“Four.”

“You are joking right?! You think sai I dey pluck money for tree?”

“And here I thought pidgin didn’t exist in your vocabulary!”

“Whatever! You want the bag you can’t afford.”

“And you want the check you can’t sniff!”

“What?!”

Josie is just as confused by her supposed proverb. No idea where that came from, whatever.

“Look, I only have two hundred Naira. You like my idea, I like your idea. We are on the same path of this hustle. Help me out and if all things go well, I will hook you up with customers.”

Bayo contemplates. He does need the money and the clientele. Sadly, she’s right.

“Two outfits only and one digital print.”

“Three outfits, one cd, and three digital prints.”

They stare intensely at each other. The room is uncomfortably quiet, warm. Josie notices him for the first time, a spark from within, damn, he is hot, holy chocolate. She breaks contact.

“Anyway, I will go get ready then.”

She places the clothes back in her bag as Bayo regains composure. He felt it as well. This isn't good for business. “I'll get the camera set up.” He goes off to prep his camera.