

#SHEKPE Chronicles

Siki Adelin

1

Naked...

Drunkenness is not a mere matter of intoxicating liquors; it goes deeper, far deeper. Drunkenness is the failure of a man to control his thoughts.

- ***Davis Grayson***

Mazi Nduka is perceived to be the oldest man in Akwara-Ngwa extended family therefore he was naturally chosen to exercise this mandatory ritual.

We couldn't actually place his age or year of birth, we could only predict the range from the many stories we were forced to listen to while seated under that old scary Udala tree at the centre of the compound.

Maybe Mazi knowingly told us these stories over and over again. The stories of the mermaid and the mean first wife, the stories of the girl that was conceived on a waterleaf garden and the most amusing of all; the stories of the cunning tortoise - I always wondered if he was referring to the same tiny hard shelled animal grandma showed us when we went to Esuk-oruko market, it couldn't have been.

Mazi was revered for his wisdom, he seemed to know almost

everything well, except that on one occasion I took my standard three arithmetic assignment to him and he told me he couldn't see the writings because he hadn't taken his regular dose of tobacco yet. I spent the next one hour combing his Hut for his pipe; I later discovered it was safely hidden in the ekpuk of the wrapper he tied around his waist.

The young couple had endured the sun, rain and the unnecessarily prolonged traditions. The groom stared at Mazi with impatience written all over his face. He had applauded himself for holding on this past six months, so much that his patience was rising or should I say running out right under the short he wore under the wrapper around his waist.

Mazi Nduka lifted up the calabash, checked for debris, and then filled it with the contents from the shekpe bottle. He poured a little on the Sandy ground, muttered some inaudible words, lifted the calabash above his head, stole a few glances at the couple then poured a sizable quantity on the ground again before he began: "Asainzike! Edugbudu! Omu`o ovum agha, ikpoto ntukugbe, atuaak ndadagha, oszungo onwi nvong ku mbang, ndongogid eyokpifie, Lagadi! Lagadi!"

Mazi gulped a mouthful of the Shekpe, rinsed his mouth with it and then poured the contents on the ground before proclaiming; "your loins will yield children" the crowd responded; "ise", "the gods of our fathers will strengthen your hands in all your endeavours", "ise" was the response again, "I plead with our ancestors to ..."

He must have continued, but my cousin came and whispered into my ears that Ikpe the palm wine tapper had brought the palm wine. Also, Nneka, Chief Nnaji's daughter, my crush, was at the back of the square where all the village big boys and girls were.

I snuck out, if not for the first reason, at least for the second.

Late in the night, that same day, Mazi had begun to display again. He must have drunk the largest share of the shekpe again. That always happened, we all knew he'd sleep and vomit all night under the Udala tree.

We never understood why the villagers always did this. Even before I left the village a few years ago to the big town across the Ukpeke River, I had always felt it was disrespectful for the elders to pour a shot of whisky or whatever wine was available for the occasion to the many gods and ancestors they mentioned. Either the ancestors had become

miniature in statue or they drank far less than they did when they were human. Obviously Mazi Nduka was going to join them sooner than later and someone else would assume the role of cheating the ancestors. I doubt if Mazi would let the other ancestors and gods have a share, Mazi never joked with wine on earth and I presume he wouldn't in the spirit world.

I pride myself on being the caring grandchild, who knows if Mazi's stories of his hidden heap of Biafran notes are true, I hear the notes are valuable now. So I was going to pick up Mazi from the mess he had created for himself, bath him as I always did and set him in his hut when I stumbled on quite a number of children, probably in their early teens clinging to the broken pane on the window, what could they be watching at this time of the night? Then it dawned on me, this is the hut of the newly wedded couple. Oh lord! They can't be watching what I think they are watching.

They notice someone is approaching and scamper off in different directions, my stealth attempt to sneak and catch one person truly failed woefully.

The future is in trouble.

The gods always have the last laugh.

2

First 420

*We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing;
others judge us by what we have done.*

- *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Yesterday, 20th April was "420".

I had no idea what that meant, so as usual, I consulted that guy who was instrumental and a better guide than our professors in our University education, I mean 'Google'.

Anyway, Wikipedia came up first with this:

"420, 4:20, or 4/20 (pronounced four-twenty) is a code-term that refers to the consumption of cannabis , especially smoking cannabis around the time 4:20 p.m./a.m. (or 16:20 in 24-hour notation) and smoking and celebrating cannabis on the date April 20 (which is 4/20 in U.S. form)"

I lived in a particular state for about 7 years and I can affirm positively that certain people celebrate this 420 unknowingly every day in that part of the world.

I don't know why I am laughing so hard while typing this, but I want to state here categorically that I do not participate in 420.

It's indeed funny what this our 'oyibo' brothers celebrate.

"Issorite!" It's a naughty Friday.

The above was just a Facebook post until Elias made the first comments. He claimed he had heard of my Indomie story. Well that wasn't true. So here is my 420 story:

It wasn't Indomie, it was beans. Why does it always have to be beans? I have no idea. It was my fifth year in the university, probably the most tiring of the levels for an engineering student. After over six months of industrial training, plus months of the flood disaster, you remember that massive flood right? We vehemently had to be dragged to lecture halls for any class whatsoever. Well, at least for the first few weeks.

It was a Thursday; my weekend began on this day unofficially. I wasn't ready to stay indoors all day, so I took a stroll. Quickly I had to go checkup on some friends who lived in a more unserious part of the student community. I was hoping they were as lazy as I was and had not gone anywhere, at least not anywhere close to school.

Winipre was home, so was Kenule his next door neighbor. The girls from the opposite room were watching a program on the cable TV in Winipre's room, while Mark, Idongesit and the Joseph, who were all room-mates and lived at the far end of the corridor, were all questionably absent.

I settled in, hailed every one. 'Win' as I called him, was dressing up, "how e dey be? You wan commot?" I asked. "O boy, I hear say them don paste names of project supervisors, make I go check where them arrange me put" he said.

Kenule came into the room to pick up something from the kitchen, some cubes of Maggi, I guessed. "Ogbeni, you dey arrange something? make e reach boys o" I quipped. He had a good laugh and assured that I was covered, only then did Odichinma and Ngozi register their interests in the food, "so na me sweet to beg abi?" I said as I eyed both of them.

Win left for school with a warning; "you better go check wetin Kenule dey cook o, you know say that boy wicked, e fit put six bags of Cameroun pepper give una o! Hope say you no dey commot soon?" he asked. "I dey" was my answer. Win left.

The wait for the food seemed like ages as is usually the case in a student-environment. Let's just say we had seen two movies and a documentary before Kenule finally burst into the room with a large tray of hot beans.

He laid the tray of beans on the bare tiles and gave me a spoon. The girls were on his neck, "wicked man, so na only him you bring spoon for?" they said as they scampered towards the kitchen door to fetch spoons. Kenule gave out a low laugh and asked if they too were visitors like me.

It wasn't surprising as we all rushed the hot beans, not considering the heat. It was apparent that almost everyone had an inbuilt Thermocool cooler in their mouth. Trust me, there was a time we were all eating hot rice and a seed of rice fell out of Idomotubo's mouth who was standing right over me and on to my shoulders, it gave me serious

burns, the scar is still there today. But that's a story for another day.

The beans was superb, maybe it was out of hunger we hadn't noticed that the beans had a large quantity of pepper and visible appearance of some vegetable in it.

The drama begins.

I know you're expecting tales like the one from the movie; Hangover, but no; there was no drama of that scale.

We didn't even clear the plates. Someone just shifted it to one corner of the room and we went back to watching the program on TV.

Kenule said nothing; he knew what he had done. Only he knew.

Ten minutes later, I noticed that Ngozi had slept in the exact same spot she sat to eat, this hadn't rung any bells. Finally, Kenule clears the plates, goes out probably to lock his room door, then returns to join me in the movie. He doesn't last long either. Ten minutes later, I am the only one awake in the room. Three human beings are sprawled all over the room and Odichinma was even snoring, although I didn't care to verify.

Sleeping after eating beans isn't new, from all indications, beans, especially jollof beans has this drowsing effect, which is worse if taken with some form of pap.

Minutes turned into hours. About four hours after, Winipre comes back. He isn't surprised to see people sleeping all over his room; this wasn't the first time. What he didn't know is that they'd been sleeping for well above four hours. We couldn't stay in the crowded room so we sat out on a wooden bench in the veranda. A few discussions ensued.

Its evening already, the sun is down. This was the time to waka anyhow, afterall, someone said: "to waka for nothing better than to sidon for nothing". We've been joined by several other friends, Bomađi is also here.

Two hours after, Kenule is awake, he walks out to meet us. Clearly, he isn't still balanced. We laugh at him for a while even as he joins us in discussion. Bomađi is curious when he is told that Ngozi, his crush is still sleeping. This is after her course mate had come to ask about her whereabouts after seeing that their room door was open and no one

was in.

Wetin make them dey sleep like that? Abi, the movie boring? Abi e get wetin una been dey do? Afterall, na two boys and two girls been dey the room since. I laugh at the last suggestion. All the options are being weighed. It then occurred to me that all these guys slept immediately after eating the beans and as a matter of fact, Ngozi laid as if she just fell backwards and passed out after eating the food. I told them and everyone is transfixed on Kenule now.

We all have concluded on what Kenule must have done to the beans by now but we wanted him to confess with his own mouth. He tells us the story.

We are all laughing at this time and laughing at him for falling into his undoing also.

The attention now falls on me, why you no sleep? Why e no catch you? You sure say you chop the food well? I am laughing my heart out as these questions are thrown at me. Well, maybe I am the last igbo-beans bender.

Everyone has begun to spill their own 'first time' stories by now and

we're all laughing. The girls stagger out of the room, one after the other and join us now. It had become pitch dark already except for the trickling light from a bulb in Papa Vuku's house close to his blazing ear-shattering Lister generator.

Bomađi goes on to tell us a story of how his cousin who was also his roommate hid his stack of weed in a thyme container. This wasn't an issue until Bomađi added some thyme to his Indomie one night. He sure discovered that a container may not always contain what is advertised.

But then, who adds thyme to Indomie sef?

This isn't my first 420 experience story by the way; this is the safest of the stories. I was victorious in this one.

I am positive your story is worse than mine, well, except you didn't attend an interesting university like mine.

3

Impunity.

An enemy is anyone who tells the truth about you.

- *Elbert Hubbard*

Dredge the thoughts

The creators didn't have you in mind

Wheels broken, locks frozen

The impunity alone makes my head go bald.

Hot lines with no heat

Policies with absolutely no intentions

Resolutions nobody read, no veto

Death, just death awaits.

With a knot in one hand

Faith in the other, diminished hope

The struggle is real, better be prepared

You never know when the need will come

When should we have prayed?

No, we shouldn't have stayed

This knee on my throat hurts

Who cares about the caucus' plot?

These drugs will hold forth, but just tonight.

We all know where we are headed.

But lets us all pretend we don't.

4

Question mark

*Every human mind is a great slumbering power until
awakened by a keen desire and by definite resolution to do
-Edgar F. Roberts*

After the sixth attempt, I had to review my sexuality.

Emilia had invited me to her church. They had some special program.

Emilia was my cousin's girlfriend. My cousin, Adams had been this conservative type, he never spoke about his life, his plans or his relationships. So one can imagine my excitement when he told me we were supposed to stop by Agip Estate to pick up his girlfriend to join us to the wedding we were billed to attend.

We waited at her street junction as we couldn't risk the car swimming in the pool of rain water and mud on the street.

Lo and behold, there was Emilia, beautiful, full breasted, curvy and eye blinding. I couldn't stare as much as I would have loved to for obvious reasons. She spotted us and walked towards our direction. Adams stepped out and opened the door for her. She hopped in, made an attempt to wipe the trickling sweat on her face from messing up her made-up face. Then there was the introduction: "Milly, meet my

cousin Tekena", he turned to me and said; "Tekena, meet my friend Emilia". I took her soft hands in a warm handshake and mumbled a few pleasantries.

With seat belts on, we were off for the wedding reception.

Back to my original story; weeks passed or maybe months after I met Emilia the first time, probably she thinks of me as family now, hmmm, only if she knew what goes through my thoughts. My phone buzzed; it was tucked away safely in the side pocket of my jean pants. I had to readjust to pull it out, one couldn't be more careful when in a commercial vehicle in Port Harcourt. I unlocked my phone; it was a text message from Emilia. It read: "Hey boss, how're you doing today? I want to invite you to my church on Sunday", I quickly scrolled through my contacts, and put a call across to her to confirm the message. She reiterated almost everything she said in the SMS.

Here I am laughing out so loudly that these people in this bus would think another mad person is about to begin his career. Why am I laughing? My last visit to that church began a series of unfavourable situations in this my small life.

The first visit.

On that fateful Sunday, I had done what I hadn't done in a long time; I

woke up early to prepare for church service. This wasn't my regular place of worship so I couldn't afford to be late. Also, I still had to find my way since the description hadn't registered as I was busy devouring a delicious plate of yam and pepper-spiced palm oil sauce when she called on Friday evening to remind and also explain the directions to the church. I had chosen a pair of carefully polished black aba-made Italian cover shoes to go with my light brown long-sleeve shirt and a penciled black pant. This is a new church, I would be welcomed as a first timer so I had to slay.

I had put everything in place, white handkerchief, wrist watch, hair. I took a glance at the standing mirror, admired my recently relaxed and dyed hair. I further confirmed that I had money on me (two notes of two hundred naira denomination, one for the offering and one for my transport). No need to carry more cash on a Sunday, it saves me from the temptations of the sweet tongued money squeezing pastors and also from those girls who never come to church with the hope of paying their way back home. 8:30A.M. I was out of the house.

After about twenty minutes of gallivanting around while trying to find where the church is, I was finally here. As I walked towards the door, it seemed like it was time for praise. An usher motions me to follow her, probably to that middle seat in front of the church which I assume is always reserved for a particular elder who had begun to ask too many

questions about how church funds was spent and had to be suspended. Well, I couldn't take that bait, I quickly swerved into an empty seat in the third to the last row and bowed my head pretending to pray. I smiled and said to myself, "come on, it would be rude to disturb a praying brother".

I settle in, dropped my notepad, the very one I knew I wasn't going to write anything on, stood up and joined in the ongoing praise session. I raised my head to look at everyone and there it was; the first problem.

I was the only one putting on an English outfit.

I mean, the church folks were on serious 'Etibo', wrappers of different colours, beads of assorted colours, shapes and sizes. Some men even had their traditional caps right on their head inside the church. I turned to the Pastorate and it was the same scenario, and here I was, dressed out of place. It was their national day celebration service.

I scanned the hall immediately towards the choir section to find her, her face meets mine; she's all smiles while I am 'yimuing', "why is this one smiling? You've made me easy to spot here".

The service goes on quickly; I wasn't ready to participate in anything anymore. Since I was the awkward one, "let me kukuma behave like the 'Americana' that I am dressed as na".

Service is over; she comes over and gives me a hug. We get all chatty

while I fill the first timers form that was given to me. She asks me from which tribe's tent she should go get food for me as all the tribes had come prepared with dishes common to their tribes, I shrug and continue bashing her for letting me dress out of place.

She gets a plate of food for herself and settles into eating, just then the choir director walks by, greets me and begins bombarding me with questions. I was there wondering what was wrong with him, his trouser was unnecessarily tight, hair was permed and arranged to one side, he rolled his eyes a few times and swung his hands too much not to noticed. He tells me he feels I'm a good singer; I smile and ask him why he felt that way. I concluded in my mind he must have said that because I was an invitee of his chorister so he must have assumed I was a singer from another church.

"Would you like to join us for our annual music fiesta? We would appreciate all willing hands we can find" he says. Before I get on to complain about this high level poaching tactics by churches and give him a resounding 'no', he beckons on me to sing, any song. Well, only one thing is going to happen here; I will spew out the best vocal performance I can produce and then tell him he can't get it. That's exactly what I did.

I'm ready to go home now, hunger had begun to set in, also, it had been a while I stayed in a church environment beyond one o' clock on

a Sunday afternoon. He takes down my phone number after serious persuasion. Then the problems began.

Two weeks after, Mr. Music Director is still texting me, he can't sleep without thinking about me, my melodious voice keeps ringing in his ears. He further asks whether I am in a relationship, whether I have ever been in a same sex relationship; and concludes by saying that he's slowly falling in love with me.

This young man didn't want to take my calm and understanding 'I am not interested' for an answer.

I swear, ladies, you guys dey try o with all the annoying tagging persuasions that we put up on you.

My patience was tested to breaking point, more than what I've endured with Arsene Wenger and His arsenal fc.

I have just finally dealt with the music director issue. I heard the church has terminated his contract and that has nothing to do with me.

Now you understand why I had to laugh out loud when I read her invitation text.

For sure I will definitely tell you the rest of the story when it's safe, that is if it will ever be safe.

We are all gay. Well, until we are not.

5

Bad Saturday?

Show me a thoroughly satisfied man and I will show you a failure.

- *Thomas A. Edison*

Among all the stories written in the Bible, the untold story of this Saturday, the Saturday in-between Good Friday and Easter Sunday may have been the scariest, saddest, uncertain, eventless event ever witnessed.

Jesus, the patriarch of Christianity had been crucified.....but not yet risen.

This is the point where a lot of mankind, a lot of people like me find ourselves. A point of confusion, a point of hopelessness, a stage where you doubt the very foundations that you vigorously built, you question everything, and I mean everything.

This is where a lot of people fall by the wayside. The promises had begun to be fulfilled, but then it stopped, it took an unexpected turn

and ended abruptly. It seemed all the energy, care, sacrifices and focus that was pumped in with undivided attention was actually a waste. Only if he hadn't died, only if he had chosen wisely; isn't he the all-knowing? How could he have selected a whistle blower and a thief?

I am no preacher; I know you know this story even better than I do, but there has to be a point where your human prediction must fail so that the supernatural can accomplish what mere humans can't understand. Your business, your career, your relationships, your faith, your intellect, your resources etc. all have to come to this point, before the transformation phase which you wouldn't have been able to fund can begin. There is a time for feeding thousands with few loaves of bread and then must come a time to help the feeder attain a higher purpose by drawing billions back to a fold where bread is no more needed.

But then, let's talk about Judas the one they called Iscariot for a while. I listened to some admonition of how much a failure Judas was. The story of Judas Iscariot has so badly been told such that parents don't even want to name their children after him. He is branded the height of betrayal, disloyalty, a thief etc.

If this messiah was obligated to come to earth and die, and this event was foretold several years before he was even born, then, somebody's destiny also was to be the one to kill him. I even heard that Judas' role was also spoken off years before that event also.

Jesus had finally come to earth, his main purpose was to die, Judas was also here, and his main purpose was to betray him. Judas had done his part perfectly and died just as John the Baptist had done, then Jesus also did his. Both had fulfilled their destinies, but Judas is called a failure? I don't get this.

Now, if the ultimate aim of man is to fulfill some prewritten script called destiny, then Judas must have been a fulfilled man unlike me whom I perceive my destiny is to beat Solomon's Records with women and yet I haven't even married one yet at this age.

Issorite.

6

Instagram-less

You may turn into an archangel, a fool, or a criminal - no one will see it. But if a button is missing, everyone sees that.

- *Erich M. Remarque*

There are two kinds of people, the ones who purchase some new clothes and look for the closest event to go showcase them. Then there's me.

The rise of the Slay kings and queens whose showroom is Instagram has turned everyone to photographers. You couldn't have owned a new pair of shoes, necklaces, anything, just anything without having to show your numerous fans and haters for verification and endorsement. Weddings, shows, any glamorous events had seen them all. Lest we forget; the movie theaters and malls. Restrooms of major hotels and beautiful architectural master pieces have seen more flashes from the camera than Kim Kardashian in New York's Times Square.

I get all excited about clothes I like at the stores, pay and get them. Drop them in the box waiting for that perfect occasion to sample

them.

Three years later, the occasion is here, I'm all feeling myself, thinking I'm going to "slay" in this wedding. Lo and behold, at this junction, this "Keke" guy looks like he's been putting on this same "Etibo" for the past six years. If it were just him, I could have moved on, after all, he wouldn't be anywhere near the Autograph—the event hall where this wedding reception is being hosted. But then the vulcanizer close by is also using his probably as a coverall.

They both hail me (you know that nod guys give each other when they discover they're putting on the same outfit? That's the one).

Anyway, I'm walking back home to change to some classic denim pants and maybe a long-sleeved shirt. Let me not go and disgrace the few people who still care about me. "Sense kpor fa".

Saturdays are for deception, oh, sorry, I meant to say: Saturdays are for weddings.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locality is entirely coincidental.

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Appreciation...

My profound gratitude goes to the big Man up there in the heavens who is looking down at me right now and shaking his head. He must be saying: "this pikin no get sense o".

Also, I appreciate the efforts of some literary giants in the making, the likes of Emy Josephs, Mr. Pettixe and Rotr. Sylvester Kalu who all took time off their busy schedules to laugh off a big joke as this.

A big thank you to Marcus E. Nkpouko, C.E.O/Managing Partner of MarcusEbiden concepts for the awesome book cover. The Authors picture Credit goes to Mr. Morrison Jay.

Finally, I am grateful for the uncanny cooperation I received from Tdaniels and the 'other one' during the entire process of birthing this work.

I dare not forget you, yes you, for taking out time to read this. I know you didn't laugh, although it was my intention that you do. Sorry.

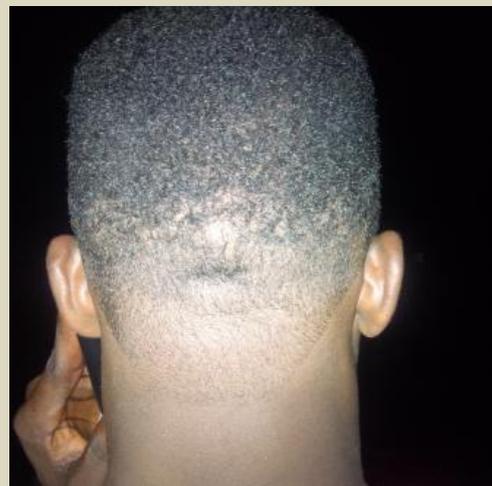
Shekpe Chronicles is simply '24/7'. It reflects our daily struggles and lives as individuals.

Some juxtapositions made by the author brings about inner reflections that attempts to challenge age long highly revered concepts and ideas. _ Take a glance at 'Bad Saturday?_'.

'Shekpe' as a concept has successfully been demystified in this chronicles. To me, anything or anyone that accelerates the inability of a man to control his thought or action is 'Shekpe'.

- Rotr. Sylvester Kalu

ABOUT ME?



Siki Adelin is Port Harcourt based, obviously shy. He is a hardened lover of Shekpe and also his toilet seat. He is a graduate of No wait, that's too much information.

#SHEKPE Chronicles is his first attempt at being silly.