

You Cook For Me?

By

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As we had done so many times before, we stared at the ceiling. Well, I didn't. I stared at the bottom of the top mattress in the bunk bed. I could hear Mart rustling paper, coming from the top bunk.

"Whatcha got there, dude?"

"Letter. From home." I turned my head to the wall to look at, for the time, the picture of my daughter, Annabelle.

"Everything cool with the family?" I stroked her forehead, fading from my continuous touch.

"Looks like it's all good. Pam says the kids are getting excited for my release." I could picture his smile in his tone. Mart was to be let out in three weeks. I had five months.

We sat in a silent trance, with family on our minds, until the warden's keys entered our door. We sat up. This visit was not in the day's schedule. This visit could mean only one thing; Mart and I looked at each other and then simultaneously looked at the spare bed on the other side of the cell.

"Hello fellas. Got a new friend for ya. Be kind, he's a pussy cat." The sarcasm in the guard's voice was so obvious, it made the man behind him laugh as he stormed his way past. After ensuring the new inmate was inside and then having a quick glance around the bare cell, the guard slammed the door.

He stood, completely still in front of us, giving us a chance to weigh him up. It was here I noticed he was fat. He didn't have an entirely fat body, he simply had an extremely fat, round belly. He was bald, black and beaming tiny, yellow teeth. He stood with his feet pointing outwards and his belly pushed towards our faces. He turned towards his bed and put his bedding on it. All he held in his hand was his bible.

"You my new friends eh?" He spoke with a strong African accent. We looked at each other. He didn't stop smiling, "You my new friends, eh?" He then laughed hysterically. "I am Ayo."

"Sorry?" I asked, perplexed at this man's sheer confidence.

"Ayo. Ay. Why. Zero." I had never heard somebody spell their name with a number before. He approached me and stuck out his hand to Mart. I got a close-up view of his bulging stomach. I heard "Ayo" and then Mart respond with his name. Then he bent down to me, "Ayo". I put out my hand for him to shake. It was a weak shake, almost limp, not what I expected. I said,

"Michael."

"Micro?"

"Michael."

"Micro?"

“No. Michael.”

“Micro. I choose you to help me with something.”

“Piss off Ayo. You don’t choose me for anything.” He didn’t listen, he didn’t even acknowledge that I had spoken. He had had his back to me the whole time, looking for the book that was already in his hand. “You read something for me.” It was the bible. “I can no read, but I want to love my God. You read one line for me.” He shoved the bible in my hand. I looked at him and he still wore that desperate grin. I opened the book and looked down. The first thing that struck me was that I didn’t see any words. Just pictures. Then I noticed the pictures were of shagging pornstars. The shock of it actually brought a smile to my face. Suddenly Ayo grabbed the book off me.

“Ohh, how they get in there? Eh?”

“Well I don’t know, do I.”

“I don’t know how they get there.” He shuffled back and hid his bible, pictures still inside, under his pillow. Mart and I still hadn’t moved. We were completely entranced by the sheer craziness of this man. We both instinctively felt that we could only lay down when he laid down. We didn’t want to miss anything interesting. He lay on his bed, so we did too. I had time to weigh up my situation and it reminded me of the five months I may have to spend with him. I was trapped in more ways than one. I could guess

what Mart was thinking. He was probably blessing his lucky charms that he only had three weeks left. I wonder if he was thinking about his inmate, trapped with this nutter for five months, maybe. My thoughts were distracted by Ayo sitting up. I turned my head to face him. He violently coughed up and then spat out the residue into his hand. He perused at it for some time and then finally wiped it on his leg. I almost vomited and turned away as sharply as possible. I looked at the picture of Annabelle and tried to picture what she was doing this very instant. I imagined her eating a jam sandwich, with the crusts cut off by Mary, my wife, born to be a mother. I imagined her blonde hair being combed and her looking at her sandwich, deciding the best way to eat it. Then I was interrupted.

“Eh, Micro.” I wasn’t sure of how much more of this guy I could take.

“What? What do you want?”

“You cook for me?”