

Decay... that was all that was left, that was what it felt like.

The late harmattan 's breeze ruffled the rusted metal windows, creating ominous creaks which whispered to the empty classrooms. The abandoned buildings hollowed out and covered with layers and layers of sedimentary dust. According to the whispers of the winds, it had been fifteen long years since the old gates were shut down.

Cracks had formed, classrooms had turned into piles of rubble, dust and overgrowth.

Occasionally , sounds of human footsteps were heard and felt within these walks though , none of them were in for a purpose worth my recognition.

Unity School, Gyanati (U.S.G.) was an ancient school, perched in the middle of mild wilderness , Its walls weathered with age and decades of use. It was a fairly large school, serving its purpose of being a Unity School. They ran in every state in the thriving country, be it in twos or more. Even Jigawa, the little state most other Nigerians would have to consult their states and capitals to remember, had two of those magnificent schools. How I knew? It wasn't hard to gain information if you were a living entity within every dust particle.

Now you might be wondering what I am.. dear one, I know not either.

I am merely an existence born into the school, my dust scattered everywhere yet nowhere outside these walls. It 's a shame the people learning within never knew of my existence, yet I was with them to see their joys, sorrows, fates and destinies unfold.

In its last days, U.S .G. was crumbling, be it in infrastructure, learning, even in discipline . The decline was slow, but the end so sudden it shocked Gyanati and beyond.

Now, Little one , I will tell you the story of the last days of Gyanati, listen well, take your notes , a pen and I will do my best to reveal. According to one of my favorite quotes, and one of the most important morals of this narration, patience is key.

Monday morning.

The long awaited rain that fell heavily the night before left muddy pools of water, which, little frogs loved. Even by seven AM , the school was filled with sounds of croaking, but it wasn 't a thing to be distressed about.

Students could be seen walking from the dining hall. Those who didn't eat at the dining were easily spotted, each with a loaf of bread and a flask for storing hot tea. Children would typically complain how stale the bread would be, or how tasteless the 'colored' water tasted. But those grumbles were fewer this time.

"Oi, get in line ! The last person to come here is a goner! "

A loud voice sent shivers down the spine of the juniors. They quickly took to their heels, running to get in line. The person who had spoken was tall, well-built and was slightly hunched. That was the Senior Prefect of the school, the Head Boy.

More and more prefects were coming, each with a cane on his/her hand and a blinding bright beret. Before two minutes was up, all the juniors were already lined in their various classes, both boys and girls.

Those who didn't get to eat on the road had already hidden their food in their schoolbags, which stood a high risk of being stolen.

The atmosphere was tense, the prefects seem to loom over the juniors like sentinels. Even the subtle chatter and laughter was subdued, as if everyone was waiting for their next order. They were stationed next to each class,

each to inspect and keep them in order. The atmosphere was silent, save for the croaking of frogs and the rustling of Nimb trees.

Few minutes passed and staffs could be seen leaving the multipurpose hall. They filed out, their faces a mixture of seriousness and dread as they made their way to the podium, some of them nodded to each other, while others exchanged brief words, their voices hushed as they mounted the podium.

The principal was the last to mount. His Agbada was sweeping the floor as he stepped forward, placing a hand on his protruded belly, signaling the senior prefects to start the assembly.

They were handed the well-worn microphones and, in that manner, assembly has started. The Head Girl was the first to start.

“Let’s sing the first stanza of the national anthem after my second count. One, two ...”

Their voices echoed through the nooks of the school and could be heard even outside the school’s walls. Signs of reliefs and subtle chuckles could be heard from those students who ‘dodged’ the daunting assembly. Yet as the anthem ended, a sob could be heard from one of the multipurpose hall dusty storage rooms.

The assembly was once again silent as the national anthem was over. The microphone was passed to the principal .

The girl weeping in the corner slowly stood up, wiping the tears on her cheeks and the dusty corners of her green pinafore. With the soft thuds of her steps, she made her way to the neatly arranged hall . Desks and chairs were in perfect rows, set up during Friday 's Labor Day for the senior s' mock exams, which were to start that Monday.

Sitting on her seat with a long weary sigh, her eyes drifted to the podium away from the hall, waiting for the news the principal was going to deliver. Overhearing the meeting, she had listened to every word. But she was n't surprised. It was bound to happen .

"Students," he began. "Due to the unfortunate incident reported to authorities , The Federal Ministry of Education had passed the verdict that our valued school gates will finally be closed in two weeks ' time. Exams will begin early in preparation for our final departure ..."

Murmurs arose from the students. Knees became weak, others scoffed in disbelief. I felt their shock ripple through the soil

To Dust: Last Days Of Gyanati.

“With that, we shall observe a minute of silence for the deceased. ”

The whole place fell silent.

Yes, someone had died .