

Kam Okoro, an average junior by all accounts considered relevant for measuring; he was of course best known as the person on campus that no one knew existed. He had an innate ability to — despite being completely present — not be seen. His own sister, Amira, an incoming freshman had even looked straight through him when she arrived...in an attempt to find him. He'd been standing in the middle of the plaza, directly beside the fountain of which her eyes widened at the site of; she stepped briskly towards his outstretched, hug-expectant arms and without a single glance up from her phone.

"Hey kid!!" He said excitedly, before their shoulders collided in a crushing brush of dismissal.

"Oh so sorry...", she piped, still nothing caring to look up as her and her rolled suitcase away hurriedly. He watched her slide the phone he'd given her for Christmas into her pocket, feeling betrayed was an understatement. Before he started after her, Kam's phone buzzed, a text from Amira that read: "Where are you? This place is huge!!"

He didn't text back. Kam simply followed her into community lounge of her dorm building. "Hey you...", he said with confidence grabbing her in for a single arm hug by the shoulders.

"Oh my go—" Amira shrieked, "...where'd you come from?!" She returned his shallow hug with a deep, waist-engulfing embrace.

With her face sunk into his chest Kam felt the warmth of home, the feeling he had been too isolated at the university to know he missed so much. He felt his Dad, Mother and younger brother, Cyrus — who were not physically there, but had a defining presence her hug. He almost began to cry.

"You okay?" Amira asked, cheerfully.

"Yeah, yeah. I'm good!" He forced a laugh, "Let's see what you got...where's your room?"

Amira pointed up towards an invisible lightbulb above their heads, by her expression Kam couldn't tell if that meant the light was on or off. She ruffled through her purse and revealed an school-color-honoring-orange envelope, "Got this in the mail with the welcome packet from the school—."

"Let's see...", Kam examined the envelope, holding it up to the light and scrutinizing it's weight.

Amira frowned in thought over her curious brothers' actions. "Uh...yeah...so it was just that and a letter from the president about on-campus living rules and guidelines..." she cleared, "Other...than...that, Uh, all the rest of the packet was um...was...ah...about other school stuff, nothing else about the....dorms..."

"Oh...", Kam hesitated feeling her inquisitive eyes and broken speech. He was bending and shaking the envelope. Trying to shake its contents in various ways to ascertain what it may be.

“Yeah...of course not. Well...I think you’re gonna have to open it.”, he said pointing at the message on the front of the envelope.

It read: “Open on arrival to campus.”

“Oh really Sherlock?!?”, Amira snatched the envelope with a slight laugh in her tone, “give me that...”. Without hesitation she began ripping the parchment.

“No...Wai—”. Kam reaches out trying to stop her, but it was too late. The cloud of green powder coated both their faces and speckled their upper-bodies in a puff of complete embarrassment.

“Ah....”. Amira stood mouth dropping to the floor and unsure what she should be doing with her hands. She could feel the weighted eyes of failing first impressions falling onto her shoulders, all the while mocking laughter whipped her at her exposed self. Every second was filled with four-years of unforgotten mockery and disrespect.

Non-abated — as a creature uninvolved with popularity would be — Kam broke in, “It’s...its...a scavenger hunt...you got green.” He said pointing towards the green pop-up tent on the opposite side of the busy lounge corridor.

Amira’s gaping mouth closed into a tight lipped frown, as her eyes moved from the brand new — now ruined — ruffled blouse she’d just gotten, to the dumb, blissful look on her older brother’s face. “Really....”. She stormed off towards the green pop-up.

Kam gathered her suitcase and followed after, waving awkwardly at passerby as if his face and body wasn’t speckled with green.

As Amira neared the green team, she noticed first the inviting sign labeled “Welcome Home Lynx!”. Secondly, she comfortably noticed the green-tinged hands of all the students who approached the pop-up ahead of her.

“We’re the Wildcats so all the dorm-halls are named aft—” Kam started.

“I get it!”, Amira snapped.

In silence they took the few remaining steps to join the queue of waiting students, “I was a Liger first year, been a Saber since—”

Amira’s cold stare froze Kam’s sentence mid-air and the void between his mouth and her ears became a massacre; as his words fell and crashed into a million, frozen, uncared about pieces.

“Okay, I’ll shut up.” He relayed understanding.

“Hi!!”, when it was her turn she flowed with energy and enthusiasm. A complete shift of polarity from a moment before.

“Nice blouse...” The micro-braided pop-up attendant jabbed as an introduction. “Just need to see your I.D. darling...”. She twirled the fuzzball topped pen around her fingers.

“Okay...” Amira smiled again pillaging through her heavy purse.

“Uh....student ID...” Ms. micro-braid informed through a big pop of bubbled gum.

Amira shifted uneasily, “Yeah...uh, right...” she began to pat herself down nervously. Looking around and with a pout of confusion she found Kam’s eyes, “I know I just had it...can you look in my bag?” She turned to present her backpack.

He smiled and simply pulled the lanyard around Amira’s neck towards the dorm hall attendant.

“Thanks...uh...Ah-mira. I say it right? Okay. Your clue is...let me see...”, micro-braid pulled out a tablet and took a photo of Amira’s badge with it. “Is this your cell?”

Amira verified the number that showed on the screen. Then continued to rock back and forth on her heels anxiously.

“It’s sent...” micro-braid smiled playfully, tilting her head with a wink. “Next.”

Amira and Kam shuffled away, her phone buzzed momentarily. Kam rolling the suitcase in one hand, guided the phone-screen drawn younger sister of his through the evermore crowding lounge as more students piled in and burst open their envelopes. The room made him feel like he was trapped in a microwaveable rainbow-popcorn bag. Colorful clouds erupted into the air all around them; Coating everything in their presence. By the time the siblings made it outside they were completely covered from head to toe in a chalky, spotted mural of freshmanhood.

Now that her attention had been shifted from caring only of what others think of her to now trying to solve a problem, Amira has become the oblivious one. Kam knew when his sister found something to twist her knot her around she was relentless until she got an answer. It was a trait he admired about her and hoped it’d serve her well throughout her tenure at the school.

“Can you make any sense of this?” She turned for Kam but he was standing in front of her. “Kam?!?”

“Here let me see it...”, he grabbed the phone from her clutch.

“Oh...”

The text message was only a string of words and emojis, “🔍 your clue where📁🔍 a 📚 or 🙌. Ask Dewey📁a Lynxes crew.”

“I don’t know...”, Kam started, he did have an idea about it but he wanted to contemplate it longer before he voiced his opinion. “How bout we put this in my room first?” He said as he failed to hoist the heavy suitcase in indication.

“Alright deal...”



“Well there’s like four bookstores on campus and more than a couple libraries. Each department has its own, so....”

“That’s a lot...how do they expect me to find—“

There deciphering conversation was cut short as a girl ran shrieking beside them. “There it is!!!”

Amira caught a whiff of pumpkin spice scented body spray as the girl sprinted past their faces and towards the Oak tree off the path they walked. She was trying to reach the bird feeder that hung on its lowest branch; unfortunately that branch was still about a foot and a half out of her reach.

To Amira’s annoyance Kam trotted off to the girl’s rescue. She scoffed loudly when he asked her to help give him a boost.

“Aye...Amira can you give me a hand?”

“Are you kidding...” she rolled her eyes at Kam as she walked towards him and the other wide eyed and smiling freshman that her brother took upon himself to save. “I’ll get it.” Amira waited for Kam to position his knee for her to stand on. A tag team maneuver they’d done countless times as kids to get forbidden snacks from the top of the fridge or rescue kites from trees.

“Thank you so, so much!!” The girl exclaimed, shaking with excitement as she took the bird feed from Amira.

Though standing as a proud savior, Kam went ignored as the girl only thanked Amira. He rubbed a hand back over his starter locs in desperate need to escape the awkwardness before Amira let him know how foolish he’d been.

Before the sibling banter could ensue they were interrupted by the shattering glass. They turned to see the girl had smashed the bird feeder to pieces upon reaching the sidewalk. She reached down into the mess and recovered a shimmering key.

Amira just stared, trying not to feel furious and jealous.

“Well that’s hopeful...”, Kam watched as the girl ran away towards the girl’s dormitories.

Amira elbowed him in the side. “Let’s go to the library. I think Dewey means we gotta look up something.”

“Fine by me.” Kam agreed, “I do have a 10:30 so you need to hurry up.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatevs...”

They walked into the library and witnessed semi-silent pandemonium — incoming Freshman were zooming in and out of aisles, asking anyone who would listen for directions and driving the librarians up the wall with their franticism.

Amira, feeling the heat of the frenzy joined in with her classmates and made a beeline for antiquated filing system.

Kam feeling unnecessary to the operation at this point decided to let his sister be independent for the time being — he took the time to look for a book himself. With his air of invisibility he went up and down the aisles without so much as a second glance. He spooked one of the librarians by saying “excuse me”. The middle aged woman quickly collected pushed her rack of books away after a stern look, clouded by the embarrassment she felt for being startled. Kam knew she thought he’d done it on purpose, but it wasn’t his fault she hadn’t noticed him trying to get by.

Kam grabbed a book off the shelf: “The Untold: ‘The Map’” by Alexandra A... He targeted a table and chair a few paces away and began reading en route to it. Sure footed and never breaking an eye from the pages in his approach he easily avoided a frenzied freshman with an in-step spin move and plopped down into the chair. The chosen spot was easily the quietest place in the whole library.



The arguing grabbed his attention from the second chapter, he looked up and saw what he assumed to be the head librarian arguing with someone outside. The window was up so he was able to hear their aggressive words, although he didn’t know a lick of the French tongues knew an argument when he heard one.

The librarian pointed an angry finger in the argumentees face, “J’ai dit que nous ne pouvions pas le supporter! C’est trop dangereux...”

“En tant que membre de l'ordre, c'est votre responsabilité. Chacun a son temps avec lui. C'est maintenant à votre tour Marvin! Ne me battez pas pour ça..” The French woman said her peice to the librarian, shoved an open box into his arms and strutted strongly away.

Marvin the librarian oblivious to being watched placed the box on the windowsill just under Kam's nose. Kam chuckled as he watched the librarian shuffle away in haste trying to catch the Madam. “Say, what've you got yourself into Marvin...”. Curious he pulled down a cardboard flap and peered into the box.

Inside only a book and a pair of golden spectacles. The glasses were thick, laden with gold across the bridge and end pieces; the temples of the glasses were wooden and ancient looking. Kam examined both items without touching for a time. Then taking one last look towards the arguing couple he grabbed the box and pulled it into the library.

The lights flickered, there was a momentary shout of excitement from one of the freshman girls, followed by group laughter. Everything went back to normal — crazy, but normal for the day — it was just a flicker.

Kam pulled the book slowly out of it's box, careful to preserve every centimeter of its existence in his memory. He set it down on the table and studied it at length before moving on to the glasses.

“What's that?” Amira startled him from behind. “These are cool...”, she said grabbing the glasses, with the opposite care that Kam had been handling them with, and put them on her face.

“Hey! Give those back...”, Kam protested with little energy, she had crashed his investigative event.

“Hold on...”, Amira swatted at his lazy hand. “How do I look?”

Kam took the same lazy hand and squeezed the bridge of his nose with it.

“Check it ooooouuuuttt!!”, Amira dragged the excitement with her words. She held out her palm, displaying the room key triumphantly.

“What's that on it?”

“It was in a freaking jar of red paint!”, Amira slapped her hands to her hips, the confidence of victory fueling her eccentricity. “Why're you reading “Grimm Brother's Fairy Tales?”

“I'm not I just —“, Kam looked up at his sister excitedly, “Wait you know what that says?”

“Yeah it's French...”, Amira said matter of factly.

The obviousness directed by her tone went unacknowledged by Kam, "...okay...you speak French?!"

"How do you not know that?!", Amira asked flustered, "Mom and I took classes together..."

"Mom speaks French?"

"You're such a clown dude...", Amira placed the webbing between her thumb and forefinger on her forehead. Creating a visor between her and Kam's stupidity.

"Man you don't know French...", Kam laughed, "Prolly just knew the cover."

Amira popped her hip out not far from the distance that her lips popped also; this popping served as the prerequisite to the 'really' face then delivered. "Try me."

"Okay what's this say?" Kam opened the book and turned to a random page. He knew literary structure well enough to spot the beginning of a story and held it out for her to read.

"il était une fois—" Amira started...her skin felt colder the coldest day she could remember; and the inside of her throat burned like she'd just drank a cup of freshly made coffee too quickly. She felt all of this and completely numb at the same time. Weightlessness, then nothing. She lost consciousness.

To Kam's horror as the French words began to escape his sister's mouth, the most terrifying moment of his life happened. A bright light burst and emitted from the pages of the book he held and pulled his sister into it faster than he could react. It was like she was being summoned into a poke-ball. The only thing left where she had just stood were the glasses. He stood in fear, falling over the chair he'd been in. Rubbing the ground where his sister was just standing. Too in shock to yell for help like he wanted to, he picked up the glasses shakily putting them on his face and grabbed the book. Tears falling as he searched for the page he'd just been on.

When he found the page it he heard the librarian behind him, "Son....listen to me...just put it down..."

"No...I can't....I ha—I have to...she's my sister. It's just her first day...."

"It's okay...it's okay...just listen to me...."

He saw Marvin beginning to climb into the window and knew where this ended if he didn't do it. He looked down at the page and read it as best he could, "Barbe bleue, il était une fois"





When Kam came to he found himself staring down at a saddle and swaying at the rhythm of pace. With balance interrupted he slid and crashed onto the dirt laden path.

“Whoa, whoa...”, someone ahead of him yelled.

Kam struggles to stand and collect himself under the unfamiliar weight of bladed weapon and complementary leather armor.

“Oh good it’s you...”. Marvin the Librarian was donned in similar fashion to Kam. “Listen son. I know you don’t get what’s happening, but if you want to get your sister out of here alive, we gotta go.”

Hysteria aside, Kam nodded. “Say less...”

They took up horseback once again and headed in the direction of the towering castle that dominated the ambient backdrop.

This Excerpt is adapted from the original Grimm Brother’s Fairy Tale, “Blue Beard”:

Terror stricken, Amira ran out of the room, dropping the bundle of keys in her haste. She stumbled, picking them up as quick as she could and sprinted to her bedroom. She sat in the bed cross legged, try to calm her sporadic breath and thumping heart. She was trapped in a castle of the dead! So this is what had happened to Blue Beard’s other wives...

Amira noticed the small key was stained with blood. “I’ve gotta get this dang thing clean before the psycho gets back...”, she thought to herself.

She washed, she scrubbed and she rinsed, all in vain.

Amira’s heart sank to the floor that evening as Blue Beard returned home. Luckily, she made it through the rest of the evening and into to the next without him asking about the keys. Although he had remarked:

“You look a little upset darling as anything happened?”

“Oh, no! No...it’s nothing.”

“Are you sorry I came back so soon?”

Amira cleared her throat harshly against a sip of her wine glass. “Not at all!! Just overjoyed I suppose...”.

She tried in every spare moment she could get away with to scrub the blood stains from the key, but there was no luck. She wasn’t able to sleep at all that night. Her eyes were glued open and her mind racing, trying to establish a plan of escape.

The next day Blue Beard said:

“Darling give me back the keys...”

Amira didn’t hesitate, shoving them into his hands and turning immediately to walk away.

Blue Beard snatched her wrist as she did so, pulling her back closer. “There’s one missing the key to the little room...”

“Is it...”, Amira questioned, “Are you sure? Well we need to find it then, right?! I’ll go check my room...”

“Alright...”,

Amira took her time, pacing back and forth, alone in the Queen’s chambers — trying to devise a plan of escape....

“Why is the key stained with blood?!” The large brute King turned white in the face as he hoarded out the accusation.

“Blood?!?”, Amira gave him a look of confusion from her seat at the large table. “I don’t know...”

There was no doubt in Amira’s mind that the King was over seven-foot. And he had shoulders as wide as a car was from headlight to headlight. The ogre-like man approached her with an unwavering stare of violence in his eyes, “You know very well!”, he retorted. “You went into the little room didn’t you?! Well you’ll be going back again, this time for good, along with the other la—AAAAHHHHH!!!!!!”

Amira cut the diabolical speech in half by stabbing her steak knife into the grunt’s ridiculously large hand. Straight through the center of it, she felt the tip of the blade touch the table beneath.

Kicking and scrambling away immediately, Amira felt the long dress tearing from Blue Beard’s clutches. “Anna!!!! Anna!!!!” She yelled for the woman who had claimed to be her sister when she woke up in the castle. She didn’t have time to look or wait for the woman; instead Anna went straight for the hiding spot she’d scouted out.

It took a while but she finally heard him coming down the hall, laughing maniacally. "Where are you wife?!?!", he barked. "You must die!!!"

"OH!!! Oh no!!! I pray you!", Anna begged...

"Let her go!!" Amira revealed herself, she couldn't let the woman be killed because of her own cowardice.

Blue Beard dropped the scared woman. Anna immediately scrambled and crawled towards Amira.

No one moved for a long pause, they just stared one another down. Without breaking eye contact with Blue Beard, Amira whispered to Anna, "Go get help, see if our brothers are on their way..."

With that, Anna released her clutch on what remained of Amira's dress and bolted away.

"Wife your time is up!!! Come here.", Blue Beard commanded.

"Very well...", Amira obliged, taking her time. Keeping her nerves and fear from showing took all of the will power she could bring about. "You know you don't have to kill me..." she started as she neared the royal giant. "I won't tell anyone what I saw...I'll never say a word!!"

"Yes, you'll never say a word for eternity!!!" He raised his sword over his head ready to bring it down atop Amira's head.

Amira winced; cowering and bracing for the oncoming death blow that never came. Instead all she heard and felt was the clattering vibrations of sword, crown and three hundred pounds of royalty crashing to the ground. As she opened her eyes she saw a single arrow piercing Blue Beard's eye socket.

Turning to see who her hero was, she saw Kam running towards her. He was wearing the most medieval getup she could ever imagine and running like a child with his arms outstretched.

Kam grabbed his sister and gave her the biggest hug he'd ever given her in his life. "Don't ever do that again. Mom and Dad would've killed me..."

"I didn't know you could shoot a bow..."

"Pfft...", Kam stood triumphantly, "Dad and I been bow-fishing so many times I couldn't count it!!"

The girl, Anna and the librarian, Marvin approached them with great concern over whether the King would stand up again. Marvin kicked his foot a few times for good measure.

“Would everyone be so kind as to repeat after me...”, Marvin said donning a pair of glasses that were the silver-sister of the ones from the box. “...toujours après..”, Marvin instructed.



Moments later, they were all sitting at a table in the quiet area of the library once again. Looks of astonishment, excitement and wonder across all of their faces.

“Anna?!?!”, Amira’s excited probe broke the silence.

“It’s actually Jaz.”, replied the girl who had just been stuck in the story with them. “Thanks for helping me with the bird feeder earlier.” She kissed Kam on the cheek and skipped away from the table; leaving both Okoro siblings in absolute, open-mouthed shock.

“Welcome to the order son.” Marvin held a hand out for Kam to shake. “You proved yourself far better than any recruit ever could...obviously none of this happened, understood? Report back here tomorrow at 9, I’ll explain everything.” Marvin released Kam’s hand only after receiving a nod of understanding. He stood, collecting the book and glasses back into the cardboard box. “And you...” he looked at Amira. “Stay outta trouble while you’re here...”.

Amira smiled back, “bien sûr, monsieur”.