

## The Prerequisite

Life can be weird. It can be fascinating, terrifying, and a whole lot of things in between. Maybe that's why I'm sitting here, wondering what to think about 2025. Was it amazing? Was it not? Was it everything I hoped it would be, or just another addition to the early chapters of my life?

Now that my thoughts have had time to settle, here is the verdict: 2025 was a mix. It was everything and nothing at all.

I started it with SIWES. Like every other coursemate, I had to face my industrial training. I was shy, I didn't know a soul at my workplace, and I found myself missing the safe peace of school. I remember my first day like it was yesterday. I walked in with high expectations, only to end up sitting in a freezing room, laptop-less and jobless for hours, sleeping away what felt like an eternity. I felt like a tiny dot in the universe, realizing the world definitely did not revolve around me.

But I couldn't let it stay that way. Over the next six months, I forced myself to find joy in the little things from the pastries they sold to the satisfaction of helping people. Slowly, the boredom transformed into affection. I grew to love the work, the staff, and the routine. Whether it was skipping work to hit the pool with friends or driving around the institute to look at the lake, I was happy. I was sad. I was angry. It was a kaleidoscope of emotions, and by the time I had to leave, I was holding back tears.

Then came July. Returning to Babcock felt like coming home. I missed the classes, the chaos, and the life school offered. I decided then and there that I wanted the next semester to be

memorable. I went for a lead position I'd always wanted. I socialized. I opened up. And because I opened up, I met amazing people friends who became family, and one person who became much more.

Looking back now, I wonder if the bad times were just prerequisites for the life I live now. Maybe we go through the confusion of the beginning of the year just to be ready for the end of it.

Because 2025 was a lot, but mostly, it was a road that led to her.

It didn't start with a grand gesture or a poetic moment. It started with a sound that makes absolutely no sense in hindsight: "Meow, Meow, Meow."

That silly noise kicked off the happiest stage of my university life. It was just a random, bored afternoon. Seeking revenge for a prank my friend played on me, I grabbed his phone and texted Someone I didn't recognize "Chioma CS".

I was intrigued. When she replied, thinking I was him, I confessed. I told her I was just a bored guy looking for conversation. Surprisingly, she didn't shut me down. But curiosity is dangerous. I needed to know what she looked like. I asked a mutual friend for a picture, and instead, he sent her a chaotic voice note claiming I should "make babies" with her. I wanted the ground to swallow me whole.

When I finally saw her in person, I froze. She was beautiful, but she had this "resting face" a look that screamed, "Don't talk to me." I convinced myself she was out of my league. So, for weeks, we danced around each other, stealing glances at rallies but never breaking the silence.

But December changes things.

We started talking really talking. One Saturday, a quick call turned into hours. The world faded until it was just her voice and mine. She laughed a sound that was light and bright and suddenly, I found myself carefully choosing my words, terrified of breaking the spell. The next day, I watched her eat beans in the cafeteria. I despise beans, but watching her? She made it look like art.

Then came the moment I knew I was in deep. After our exams, she waited for me. She sat on a hard plastic chair outside a lecturer's office for thirty minutes, just waiting. It was a simple gesture, but to me, it was everything. We sat near the cafeteria, running on three hours of sleep, and talked for hours more.

The paranoia set in shortly after. I kept asking myself, "How? How is someone this amazing talking to me?"

But then came the evening we sat in the spot where couples famously go. The air shifted. She looked at me really looked at me staring into my eyes like she had found gold in them. As curfew approached, I hugged her for the first time. She felt warm. She felt comfortable. She felt like happy.

When the break came, we had to part ways. Twenty-three days. It sounds short, but when you are missing a piece of your heart, it feels like a lifetime.

Now, as I lay in bed, I realize that she is the answer to my year. She is thoughtful, smart, and beautiful. I look at how little time I have left before our relationship faces the outside world, and I think, I must end up with her. For the sake of how I feel now, and for the sake of all the memories I still want to make.

But with this love comes the shadow.

Fear is a strange thing. It creeps into your mind and makes a home in the spaces you never thought vulnerable. It forces you to confront the things you might lose. What if someday she doesn't feel the same way? What if the universe decides this was just a fleeting moment?

How do you tell someone that they are the first thought in your morning and the last prayer in your night? How do you tell someone that every version of your future somehow has them in it?

I want to tell Chioma that she has become an unshakable part of me. That loving her, even for this short time, has taught me patience, understanding, and the terrifying beauty of vulnerability.

2025 was a reminder of how wrong I can be. A reminder of how fate does crazy things. But mostly, it was a reminder that perhaps my entire life has been a prerequisite to meeting her. And now that I have, my only fear is a world where I don't keep her.

And this could be my emotions talking, and it could be my head, or it could be every part of me  
talking now

But Will you be my Girlfriend?

I was going to wait till 12<sup>th</sup> and frankly I don't want to, because I don't want to have to wait a  
second not being able to call you mine.

Happy New Years Med,

Yue.