

A FAIR CHANCE

Written by

Chiji Ononiwu

Address  
Phone Number

FADE IN:

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY

ALEX KODI, 28, sits alone on a leather seat in a plush waiting room. He has the appearance of a thoughtful, independent person.

Alex smooths his suit with his hand as he looks out through the glass window onto the scenery below.

A portly woman - BIMPE, 37, is suddenly beside him. Alex is startled.

BIMPE  
We will see you now.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - BOARDROOM - DAY

Alex stands in front of an expensive wooden table. Opposite him is CHRIS, 23, bespectacled and in a wheelchair. Chris looks into a laptop. Bimpe sits down on his right. Next to Chris is Hauwa, 30, the definition of the modern, sexy business female. On Hauwa's left is IDOKO, 44, dressed in a KAFTAN, holding a newspaper.

CHRIS  
Sit down please.

ALEX  
(sits)  
Thank you.

CHRIS  
My name is Chris. I'm the MD. This is Hauwa, a director with the company. Over there-  
(points)  
-is Idoko, Deputy Managing Director. And you've met Bimpe.

Alex nods.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
She's the GM in charge of Bank Operations. For the purpose of this interview, she'll double as HR. So-

Chris gives a quick but distant smile.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
Let's, ah, begin. Please introduce yourself.

ALEX  
My name is Alex Kodi. I was born twenty-eight years ago in Imo State. After-

Chris types on his laptop.

ALEX (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
-my secondary school education, I-

He narrows his eyes and turns to whisper in Hauwa's ear. She nods and smiles, glancing intermittently at Alex.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
-gained admission to the University of Lagos where I studied psychology and-

Idoko looks at the newspaper, then at his phone, his eyes expectant. He scrolls through his phone again. His face falls, disappointed.

ALEX (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
-graduated with a two-one. After that-

Bimpe receives a call. She gets up.

BIMPE  
Fanta and wine? Yes. Give it to the twins... No. The big cartons...

She walks away.

ALEX  
After...

Alex stops and looks at the interviewers. They all seem engrossed in something else.

Alex looks a little miffed.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Excuse me.

No one answers. They keep talking.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Excuse me, I'm done.

Hauwa nudges Chris and points to Alex. Chris keeps talking in her ear. Now, Alex is angry. He sort of loses it.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Are you guys interviewing me or not. Because I did not come here to waste my time.

Everyone looks at him, silent, with blank expressions on their faces, like robots. Bimpe returns to her seat.

Finally, Chris speaks.

CHRIS

Most people would just sit there for the next thirty minutes. But you didn't.

Chris turns and looks at Idoko.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

It shows impetuosity, a low threshold for tolerance.

IDOKO

It also means you are impatient. Customer Service is about patience.

Alex locks eyes with Hauwa for a moment. Chris notices.

CHRIS

Customer Service is like a guy trying to keep a girlfriend with many suitors. You buy her flowers, you spend money, you stay on your best behavior. You give her attention, always looking at her, just like you've been doing since you walked in here.

ALEX

Huh?

Chris wheels himself toward Alex. Alex keeps glancing at Hauwa. He can't seem to stop himself.

CHRIS

I noticed that you've been... cutting eye for Hauwa. I bet you're thinking of asking her out on a date.

Alex wrenches his eyes away from Hauwa's.

ALEX  
Excuse me?

CHRIS  
I don't blame you. I tried to ask  
her out myself but-

He points to his legs. Alex narrows his eyes.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
What? Are you embarrassed that I  
can see that you're developing a  
crush on her? Or more importantly,  
that you are going to fail this  
interview?

Alex looks angry.

ALEX  
I think you're full of yourself.

CHRIS  
(chuckles)  
Oh? I think I was being a little  
soft earlier. Let's get real. You  
aren't cut out for this job.  
Customer Service Rep? Shit. I made  
calls to your current employers.  
They say you are a terrible fit in  
their team. The way they sounded? I  
think you're going to be sacked.  
Maybe you know. Maybe that's why  
you want to jump ship.

Alex clenches his jaw.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
Tell me I'm wrong.

ALEX  
I'll tell you something. You're  
also full of shit.

CHRIS  
Okay. Get out.

Alex stands, furious. He stomps out of the room.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Alex steps in, breathing angrily. He stops.

ALEX

No... no...

He walks back into the boardroom.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - BOARDROOM - DAY

Alex strides back in, pointing at Chris.

ALEX

Hey.

They all look up at him.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You can't just talk to people like that because you are... are...

CHRIS

Disabled?

ALEX

Handicapped.

CHRIS

But I am disabled.

ALEX

Maybe. Still, it doesn't give you the right to be a jackass. I came in for an interview. Instead, it was an interrogation. I wasn't given a fair chance.

CHRIS

Look at me. Do you think I got a fair chance in life?

ALEX

I think you got more than a fair chance. People must have felt sorry for you all your life, helping you get to where you are now. And I think that got to your head. You don't know how to judge people fairly. You have no soul.

Chris leans back into his chair, sizing Alex.

CHRIS

Okay, Alex. You want a fair chance?

Chris wheels out to meet Alex face to face.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Idoko here wants my job. Last week, the company lost a N170m bid to our rivals. While it wasn't my fault, the board is calling for my head. And Idoko is pushing for my sack so he can sit on the throne.

He wheels to Bimpe's side.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

The reason we lost the bid was because Bimpe's twins fell desperately ill last week. She had to attend to them while they were in the hospital. If she was around, we would have won the bid. Now, someone has to pay for the goof. Do I fire her or not?

Bimpe and Idoko stare at Alex, unblinking. Chris is now beside Hauwa.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Hauwa is the daughter of my biggest investor. After last week's fiasco, he has been... suggesting that she take over the company. She has beauty, she has brains and she has the balls to be the MD. She also knows my wife. If she told her of my cheating ways, I'd be a dead man. Besides, my wife is her sister.

Chris wheels back to Alex.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I want to stay as head of this company. You tell me how, and you'll be employed in the next thirty minutes.

Chris looks at his watch.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

The floor is yours. Fair chance.

Alex looks from Hauwa to Bimpe to Idoko. He breathes in.

ALEX

Idoko has a gambling problem.

Idoko looks shocked.

IDOKO  
I certainly do not.

ALEX  
Yes you do. You keep checking the internet on your phone. Earlier, I saw the site you were browsing - CoolBets. It's a gambling site.

He turns to Chris.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
You want to take him out? Spread the word that he is a gambler, one who will take dangerous and unnecessary risks. Check his travel destinations in the past one year. I'm sure most of the places he visited have casinos. Proof enough.

CHRIS  
Go on.

ALEX  
You said Bimpe was with her twins in the hospital? Bullshit. I heard her talk on the phone. Give the twins Fanta and wine? No self respecting mother would do that.

BIMPE  
What are you saying?

ALEX  
I'm saying you were probably missing because you were attending to your business - I'm guessing a depot for non-alcoholic drinks.  
(to Chris)  
You should probably sack her.

Chris gives Bimpe a hard look. She looks away.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
That brings me to Miss Perfect here - the belle of the ball-

Hauwa raises her eyebrows.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
-doesn't make a sound but she is heard. I'd say she has more power than every other person in this room combined.

CHRIS  
Because of her father right?

ALEX  
No. It's all her. You've been sucking up to her, trying to impress her since I came in. I noticed how she kept glancing at me. At first I thought she was attracted to me...

Hauwa's eyes gleam as a half-smile curls up her lips.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Then I realized, she was sizing me up, checking for weaknesses, as I'm sure she does to everyone she meets. That makes her either a powerful ally or a most dangerous enemy.

For a couple of moments, Alex and Hauwa stare at each other. The tension between them is fierce. He turns to Chris.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Conventional wisdom dictates that you destroy these people before they take you down.

CHRIS  
Shouldn't I?

ALEX  
No. They're too valuable. Even Bimpe. Use them instead. Tap into their strengths, like a parasite, and get stronger. That way, you stay as boss. Long live the king.

The expressions on their faces are blank and unreadable.

CHRIS  
Could you leave us for a bit?

Alex nods and stands.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Alex silently chides himself. He shakes his head.

ALEX  
Me and my big mouth.

Bimpe is suddenly beside Alex, surprising him.

BIMPE  
You may come in.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - BOARDROOM - DAY

Alex sits down.

CHRIS  
You applied to work as a Customer Service Rep. We cannot offer you that job. I'm sorry.

Alex nods, crestfallen. He starts to get up.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
On the other hand, you have a particular skill set, one we've been searching for.

ALEX  
Okay...

CHRIS  
You have an eye for detail and the gift of deduction. No one else has been able to tell me what the characters at this table stand for.

ALEX  
Characters.

CHRIS  
Yeah. They were made up for the purpose of this interview. If you must know, Idoko is in Accounting. Bimpe is my secretary.

ALEX  
And Hauwa?

CHRIS  
Oh. She's who I said she is.

ALEX  
Oh.

CHRIS  
It's not everyday that I'm impressed. So I'm offering you another job.

Alex looks confused.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
There is a spy in our company.  
That's the reason we lost the bid.  
Our rivals knew every move we made  
and countered effectively.

Chris looks determined.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
I need you to find the rat for me.

He hands Alex a sheet of paper.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
That's our offer of your  
remuneration-

Alex looks at it. His eyes go big.

ALEX  
Holy Saints!

CHRIS  
Your cover will be a consultant  
from an external auditing company  
interested in our books. You'll  
have the rundown of everyone in  
this organization with unrestricted  
access to everything to need. What  
do you say?

Alex looks from the sheet to Chris and then to everyone else.  
His eyes finally lock on Hauwa's face. She blushes a bit.

ALEX  
Before I say yes, I'd like to ask a  
question.

CHRIS  
Sure, anything.

Alex looks squarely into Hauwa's eyes.

ALEX  
Would the pretty lady mind if I  
asked her out on a date tonight?

Chris and Idoko groan. Bisi rolls her eyes. Hauwa blushes,  
looks down, then up at Alex. Her mouth opens slightly.

FADE OUT.