

POOF

Written by

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Logline: When the desperate son of a magician seeks his help to improve his poor grades at school and avoid the taunts of his tyrannical class teacher, he must act fast to stop him from repeating his class and losing his friends.

A curmudgeon of a class teacher, Mr. AGYEI (50), holds in his hand a few answer sheets with test scores. A dreaded hush hangs in the air.

This is a GRADE SIX classroom of about fifty pupils, paired in rows of five. Most of them already have their answer sheets and by just looking at their faces you can tell the wheat from the chaff.

In the middle of the third row is a smallish boy with scared eyes, known as JOEBOY among his peers.

He is stooping over his desk to avoid the piercing gaze of Mr. Agyei.

MR. AGYEI

These are the students who'll
become the burden of our society in
the future!

He sighs and mentions the next badge of names with painstaking attention to every syllable.

MR. AGYEI (CONT'D)

Derrick Asiamah. Fifteen percent.
One, five, out of hundred.

A tall boy gets up from the back and takes his walk of shame to the front of the class. As he stretches his hand to collect his answer sheet, Mr. Agyei shoots daggers at him.

He walks back to his seat, hanging his head.

MR. AGYEI (CONT'D)

Philip Dogbey, ten percent. One,
zero, out of hundred.

The same ritual plays out. Joeboy is trembling behind his desk as sweat beads gather on his forehead.

MR. AGYEI

Richard Boateng. Five percent.

Richard collects his answer sheet and hurries back to his seat. Now it's left with only one answer sheet. Mr. Agyei looks up, directing his gaze at Joeboy.

All eyes turn on him. Among them EVELYN (11), a dark beauty with cornrowed hair. She is concerned for him.

Poor Joeboy! He wilts under the gaze of the class, coiling up behind his desk. Mr. Agyei bawls his name.

MR. AGYEI
Jojo Dadson. Two percent.

Joeboy is paralysed by fear, glued to his seat like he is in a state of trance.

MR. AGYEI
Hey!

SOLOMON (11), his nerdy-looking desk-mate nudges him out of his stupor. He jumps to his feet, taking measured steps to the front of the class while keeping his head down.

Mr. Agyei holds back his answer sheet, studying him with a disdainful look.

MR. AGYEI
Why do you keep coming? Why? Just stop. School is not your thing. Follow your father. Let him teach you his tricks. A lot of gullible fools are out there, queueing to see you take the mantle. Accept your calling.

He flings the sheet at him. Joeboy catches it, walking quietly back to his seat. In this deafening silence we can hear the lowest decibel of sound.

Mr. Agyei shakes his head in mocking sympathy.

MR. AGYEI
I guess this is what you call magic. When you can't score past five percent in any subject. You're going to be twenty and still be in this class. I promise you. Or you can save yourself the embarrassment and drop out.

2 EXT. OSAE DJAN PRIMARY SCHOOL - DAY

2

A girl stands on a corridor and rings a bell.

Hordes of pupils file out of their classrooms walking across a vast compound.

Joeboy is at the back somewhere, looking out for somebody in the crowd. He looks up and sees Evelyn in the front, hurrying towards a dirt road.

He picks up pace, catching up with her.

JOEBOY
You didn't wait for me.

She ignores him, walking on.

JOEBOY
You're in a rush.

She soldiers on.

JOEBOY
Wait! See this trick.

She quickens her steps to avoid him.

JOEBOY
You okay? Evelyn! Evelyn!

He holds her shoulder to slow her down. She parries his hand.

JOEBOY
What's wrong? Evelyn! Evelyn!

She slows down and finally gives in.

EVELYN
Talk tomorrow. Have to go.

JOEBOY
Why?

EVELYN
Tomorrow!

She runs off. Joeboy watches her back as the distance between them widen until she disappears over the horizon.

His heart sinks.

3 EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

3

OPEN ON a run-down train station as a magician, SOLO (45), stands in the middle of a crowd; on a concrete platform.

He folds the sleeves of his shirt to his elbows revealing TEN ROWS OF WHITE BEADS along both wrists.

Solo grabs a BLACK CLOTH and pulls it slowly along the length of his left hand. As the cloth moves up his hand it disappears, leaving the shirt-sleeve hanging empty.

The audience gawk.

He takes the cloth with his mouth , repeating the routine over his right hand. With both hands missing, he calls out a volunteer from the crowd and asks him to wrap the cloth around his body.

He closes his eyes to psych up the crowd. They hold their breaths in expectation. Suddenly the cloth is thrown into the air as his hands shoot from underneath it.

He pulls the cloth from his body to thunderous clapping and cheering.

He holds up both hands, noticing the beads are gone

SOLO
(with a puzzled look)
My beads! They're gone. Who took my
beads? Check your wrists.

People start checking their wrists. A scream rings out in the crowd as a man sees a bead on his hand. Another follows, and then the next... the beads have been shared among the spectators.

A drawn-out applause engulfs Solo who basks in the glory with his chest proudly pushed out.

Somewhere in the back, Joeboy stands alone with a glum face.

4

EXT. TRAIN STATION - LATER

4

The crowd is gone. Solo sits on a rotten bench, stashing wads of dirty and crumpled notes into a money bag.

He pauses and looks across the bench. Joeboy is sitting quietly, staring into the concrete.

SOLO
I'm almost done.

Joeboy looks back with sad eyes.

JOEBOY
I'm not hungry.

SOLO
Ok?

Solo picks the bag. He starts to walk away. Ten yards later he turns and sees Joeboy still sitting on the bench, lost in his thoughts.

SOLO

Joeboy!

Joeboy snaps back to life, looking at his father.

SOLO

Are you coming?

Joeboy drags himself off the bench. They walk along an old rail line, following a narrow footpath.

Solo walks behind him for a moment, not saying a word. He can't take his brooding any longer.

SOLO

My magic doesn't read minds.

Joeboy doesn't respond.

SOLO

Great. Deal with it like a man.

They carry on for a while. Joeboy looks up at his father, mustering the courage to finally speak.

JOEBOY

Don't like school anymore. Want to stop.

Solo pretends not to hear.

JOEBOY

Think you can talk to Ma?

SOLO

Sorry son. You're on your own.

They walk a few yards more.

SOLO

What happened to your friends? That girl. What's her name again?

Joeboy looks away.

SOLO

Evelyn. Yes! Evelyn.

JOEBOY

She's not my friend anymore.

SOLO

How come?

JOEBOY

I'm going to repeat.

SOLO

I didn't know children your age can repeat class.

JOEBOY

That's what Mr. Agyei said. Now Evelyn doesn't want to be my friend. What's the point? We won't be in the same class next semester. She can't be friends with a junior.

Those last words hit Solo. He pauses for a second. Joeboy crosses his path, stopping him in his tracks.

JOEBOY

Help me.

SOLO

How?

JOEBOY

Show me some tricks to help me pass. Please. I don't want my friends to leave me behind. They'll start calling me grandpapa.

SOLO

I'm not into those tricks.

JOEBOY

You have to do something.

Solo brushes him aside and continues walking. Joeboy now follows him.

JOEBOY

What's the use of magic if we can't use it to help ourselves?

He hurries past his dad and crosses his path again.

JOEBOY

I'm not repeating. If I fail, that's it. No more school for me. I'll follow you. A lot of fools are out there, waiting to watch me perform. I will accept my calling.

Solo eyeballs him, horrified at what he's just heard.

SOLO
Who told you that?

JOEBOY
Mr. Agyei.

5 EXT. OSAE DJAN PRIMARY SCHOOL - DAY

5

It's after school and classrooms are empty. Solo walks across the vast compound towards the administration block, in his magician costume.

He sees a young teacher locking up the classrooms and approaches him.

SOLO
Hello Son.

The teacher turns. He is startled by the appearance of this strange-looking man.

YOUNG TEACHER
Yes?

SOLO
Mr. Agyei, is he around?

YOUNG TEACHER
Yes. They are having meeting in the staff common room. I'll fetch him.

He follows the teacher.

6 INT. STAFF COMMON ROOM - DAY

6

The young teacher walks into a meeting. Mr. Agyei is leading discussions.

7 INT. MR. AGYEI'S OFFICE - DAY

7

Solo sits alone in a banasic office, looking around. His eyes wander onto a chalk board plastered to the wall with a schedule: subjects and times.

Just beneath the board is a glued chalkboard rack with pieces of chalk lying inside.

8 INT. STAFF COMMON ROOM - DAY 8

The meeting is over. Mr. Agyei hurries out of the room, ambling down the corridor into his office.

9 INT. MR.AGYEI'S OFFICE - DAY 9

He walks in and slows down at the sight of Solo. Solo turns and rises with a big smile.

 SOLO
 Mr. Agyei?

He stretches his hand.

 SOLO
 Jojo is my son. Nice to meet you.

Mr. Agyei ignores his outstretched hand, nodding past him to his table. He starts to pack up.

 MR. AGYEI
 I'm in a hurry.

 SOLO
 If you can sit down for a minute.

 MR.AGYEI
 (as he packs)
 I'm listening.

 SOLO
 No you're not.

Mr.Agyei stops to regard him. He sits, holding his gaze.

 SOLO
 Thank you. My son tells me you
 don't believe in magic.

 MR. AGYEI
 (scoffs)
 Is that why you're here?

 SOLO
 Yes. I'm curious.

 MR. AGYEI
 About what?

 SOLO
 About your disbelief, where's it
 from?

Mr. Agyei cannot believe it.

MR. AGYEI

You mean you came all the way here
to ask me this?

SOLO

Is that a problem?

MR. AGYEI

(scoffs)

Is that a problem? God.

SOLO

Mr. Agyei, I believe it's better
you walk your way through
conversations than jump to
conclusions. You know what I think,
me and you have the same problem.

Mr. Agyei gives him a puzzled look.

SOLO

Oh yes. You don't believe in magic.
I don't believe there are good
teachers in this school. I don't
even believe you guys teach at all.

Mr. Agyei is fuming.

SOLO

I mean, if bright students pass all
the time and bad students fail,
what really do you guys do?

MR. AGYEI

How dare you? Your son is failing
because he's lazy. All he cares
about is ...

SOLO

Magic? Believe in magic?

Mr. Agyei snorts.

SOLO

Say I make you disappear. Right
now.

Mr. Agyei is caught off guard. He hesitates for a second.

MR. AGYEI

Disappear? To where?

SOLO
It's best you find out.

The two men engage in a stare down. Mr. Agyei butts an eye and scoffs.

MR. AGYEI
I have to go.

He rises to his feet.

SOLO
You're afraid.

MR. AGYEI
This is nonsense.

SOLO
Let's make a bet.

MR. AGYEI
Sorry. Don't have time for games.

SOLO
Let's prove ourselves.

MR. AGYEI
Have nothing to prove to you.

SOLO
I believe I can make you disappear.
You believe you guys actually teach
around here. I don't see the
problem.

MR. AGYEI
Please. I have to go now.

Solo gets up.

SOLO
One last thing. Don't ever talk to
my son about his... calling. Never
again.

He storms out. Mr. Agyei simmers down, watching Solo's back as he walks across the school compound. He turns and freezes in horror looking at the chalk board.

It's now upside down with the pieces of chalk lying in the rack, defying gravity. Mr. Agyei walks cautiously to the board and studies it carefully. He tries to move the board but it's still plastered to the wall.

He steps back horrified.

10 EXT. OSAE DJAN PRIMARY SCHOOL - DAY 10

A girl stands on a corridor and rings a bell.

11 INT. GRADE FIVE CLASSROOM - DAY 11

The students run out of the classrooms with their bags. As Joeboy picks his bag to leave, Mr. Agyei walks in.

MR. AGYEI

Jojo, sit down.

Joeboy sits with a bewildered look. Mr. Agyei approaches him at his desk.

MR. AGYEI

Go out. Pick about fifty stones and bring them to the class. You can count right?

Joeboy nods and walks out of the class.

12 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 12

Mr. Agyei is alone with Joeboy. A wooden board used in playing Mancala lies on his desk. Mr. Agyei writes " ARITHMETIC " on the chalk board.

Joeboy picks the stones and arrange them in the board.

13 EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY 13

A crowd is gathered around Solo. He flashes a torchlight into his mouth and turns it off with his mouth closed.

He opens his mouth. A shaft of light shoots out. He turns and shines it on the dilapidated ticket booth behind him.

We later see him stashing money away into his money bag.

14 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 14

Joeboy is in front of the chalkboard attempting a multiplication equation. He struggles with it. Mr. Agyei frowns.

15 EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY 15

Solo pushes a sword through his stomach appearing at his back. The crowd gasp as some look away in anguish. He pulls the sword back out without a scratch.

He stacks money away in a money bag.

16 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 16

Joeboy easily multiplies fractions. Mr. Agyei is impressed.

17 EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY 17

Solo blows a WHITE balloon and pricks it with a needle. As it explodes, it turns into a WHITE DOVE.

The dove flies away.

He stacks money away in a money bag.

18 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 18

It's a full classroom. Mr. Agyei stands before the class in his usual stern face demeanour. A dreaded hush hangs in the air.

In his hands are the last badge of answer sheets.

MR. AGYEI

Derrick Asiamah. Philip Dogbey.

Richard Boateng. Come forward.

The three boys leave their seats to stand beside him. He hands them their answer sheets.

MR. AGYEI

Wait for me after class.

The boys go and sit down. There's one last answer sheet in his hand. He looks up, directing his gaze at Joeboy who is hiding his face, trembling behind his desk.

He sighs.

EXT. RAILWAY - DAY

Joeboy is running along the rail line with a big smile across his face, towards a crowd.

INT. TRAIN STATION

A long rope is coiling onto the floor from Solo's mouth, about sixty inches long. The crowd applauds as he pulls the final stretch out of his mouth.

Joeboy fights through the crowd, throwing himself at his father.

JOEBOY

I made it. I passed. I passed.

He carries Joeboy on his shoulder as the applause engulfs them.

INT. MR. AGYEI'S OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Agyei is packing up when a shadow falls on him. He looks up and sees Solo in the doorway with a big smile. He steps in.

SOLO

Do you mind if I come in?

MR. AGYEI

You're in.

He sits down. Mr. Agyei is a little nervous.

SOLO

Fifty five percent. Now that's proper magic.

Mr. Agyei scoffs at him.

SOLO (CONT'D)

Now, my turn.

He stops briefly, staring Solo in the eyes. Solo bursts out laughing.

SOLO (CONT'D)

You're afraid.

MR. AGYEI

I'm not. This is ridiculous.

SOLO

(taps the table)

Sit down. let's make this quick. I can see you're in a hurry.

Mr. Agyei sits hesitantly, feigning courage.

SOLO (CONT'D)
I can tell you where you'll
disappear to.

MR. AGYEI
I don't care. It won't happen
anyway.

SOLO
Fine. Put your hand here and close
your eyes!

Mr. Agyei swallows hard. His heart begins to race but he puts on a strong face. He places his hand on the table. Solo's face suddenly changes, becoming serious.

SOLO (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Close your eyes.

We see little shakes in Mr. Agyei fingers; he is now a little Joeboy trembling behind his desk.

He takes in a deep breath and closes his eyes. Solo starts to hum as if he is chanting, sending shivers down the poor teacher's spine.

SOLO (CONT'D)
Count ... one to five and open your
eyes.

We stay on Mr. Agyei's face. Sweat beads gather on his forehead. He opens his eyes.

Solo is gone. There's a money bag by his hand. Mr. Agyei jumps out and hurries to door. He peers out, nobody is there.

He turns and sees the chalkboard back to its original position.

He walks to the money bag and opens it carefully, uncovering wads of money.

For the first time we see a faint smile break across his face.

END