

Title: Debut.

Written by

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Logline:

On opening night, a theatre director fights to keep her play from falling apart amid chaos backstage.

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1

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

1

An empty, lit with a single light with the curtain drawn.

At one end of the stage, someone peeks from behind the curtain.

On screen: Fifteen minutes to opening.

2

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

2

Patricia, 35, is peeking behind the curtain.

GLOSH

(O.S)

Pat?

Patricia turns and finds a small group of people looking at her.

Davis (23), Stacy (21), Glosh (30), and Agatha (40) at the front of the crowd of some unnamed people.

Davis and Stacy are in traditional Muganda attire.

Glosh is holding a clipboard, and Agatha is holding a small notepad and peering at Patricia over seeing glasses.

PATRICIA

Uhm...

A phone pings, and she gets it from her pocket to read a text.

From Mark: *Hey, I don't know if I'll make it.*

She looks at it, disappointed.

GLOSH

Pat?

PATRICIA

What is it, Glosh?

Glosh steps forward and whispers in Patricia's ear.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Where did you last see him?

AGATHA

Is everything okay?

PATRICIA

(Fake smile)

Yes. Uhm, everyone, this is Agatha. She is writing an article about our show, so best behavior. I'm looking at you, Stacy.

The crowd laughs, and Stacy shyly covers her face.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Okay then. I just need to check on something, and we are good to go. Davis, Stacy, warm up.

Stacy looks to Davis and smiles, but he is looking elsewhere, at Patricia, with a grin.

Patricia looks away and grabs Glosh. She makes to lead her away, but Agatha stands in the way.

AGATHA

Hello Miss Director. I was hoping to get a quote, maybe something about opening night pressure.

PATRICIA

Pshhh, I eat pressure.

AGATHA

Haha. Okay. I was also hoping to see Jacob Kasiirye.

Patricia and Glosh freeze and exchange a look.

PATRICIA

What about him?

AGATHA

I heard rumors of him being difficult in rehearsals and wondered if his famous alcoholism was---

Patricia fake laughs.

PATRICIA

He has been a true professional, and he is going to blow everyone away tonight; you'll see.

AGATHA

I would love a quote. Where is he?

Beat.

PATRICIA

He had a small wardrobe emergency, but we are on it.

Patricia smiles and leads Glosh away before Agatha can talk.

3

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

3

Patricia and Glosh get to a private space.

She fiddles with her watch.

PATRICIA
Where is Jacob?

GLOSH
I'm not sure. I tried calling him,
but he won't pick up.

Patricia gets his phone and dials a number. The two stand there, and a few people pass. They nod to them politely.

GLOSH (CONT'D)
(To people)
Enjoy the show.

PATRICIA
Come on.

Patricia looks at her phone, disappointed.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Start searching from the fitting
room and then the bathrooms.

GLOSH
The men's bathrooms?

PATRICIA
Yeah, and maybe even the women's,
actually, and if you don't get him,
I want you to---

A young man, Sam, comes rushing to the ladies.

SAM
There is a problem.

PATRICIA
What?

SAM
The ticket machine is out of
tickets.

PATRICIA
How is that possible? It should
have for a full house.

Sam shrugs.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
(To GlosH)
Go.

Sam and Patricia remain behind.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Let me try the manager.

She dials a number, and Sam waits awkwardly.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Yes, hello, sir, the tickets are finished.

MANAGER

(O.S)

Ehhhh, what tickets?

PATRICIA

The tickets that the box office. For the show.

MANAGER

(O.S)

Show?

PATRICIA

The play. "Love and Muwogo". The one showing today.

MANAGER

(O.S)

Ohhhhh, that one. How is it going?

PATRICIA

It's not. I need tickets for the machine.

MANAGER

(O.S)

Those are in my office; tell that boy to get the key.

PATRICIA

(To Sam)

Do you have the key to his office?

Sam shakes his head.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

He does not seem to have the key to your office, sir.

MANAGER

(O.S)

Iyiii, naye...Ohhhh, I have it.

PATRICIA

What? We need the tickets.

MANAGER

(O.S)

Okay, do you have a boda man? he
can pick them.

Patricia paces.

PATRICIA

There is no time, sir.

MANAGER

(O.S)

Then I don't know.

PATRICIA

Is there a spare, maybe?

MANAGER

(O.S)

Hmmmm, let me see, spare, spare,
spare.

Patricia starts biting her nails.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

(O.S)

Eh, yes, the cleaner; you look for
him.

PATRICIA

(Sigh)

Okay, thank you, sir.

She hangs up.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Look for the cleaner, he has a
spare.

Sam nods and rushes off.

Patricia takes a moment to breathe, but her heart starts
racing, and she leans against a wall.

On screen: Five minutes past opening.

She gets her phone and types a text to Mark.

"You said you'd make time for this."

Mark replies: *"Something came up, but we'll talk."*

Patricia: *"?"*

Mark: *"Don't be that person."*

Patricia stares at the text and tilts her head back.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
(Chanting)
Butterflies, butterflies,
butterflies, butterflies.

She fiddles with her watch as she says the words.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Ah, fuck it.

She reaches into her pocket and gets a cigarette. Just as she is raising it to her lips...

DAVIS
(O.S)
Hey.

Patricia is startled and crushes the cigarette in her hand.

PATRICIA
Hey. You should be with Stacy,
polishing up.

DAVIS
We're fine. How are you feeling?

He steps closer to her.

PATRICIA
Nervous.

DAVIS
Don't be. You are a good director.

PATRICIA
I wish my mom was here, she would
know the right thing to say to make
me---

Davis attacks her with a kiss, and she pushes him away.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Dude!!!

DAVIS
(Confused)
I thought we...what's up?

PATRICIA
That was a mistake. Aren't you with
Stacy?

DAVIS
You're what I want.

Patricia steps away from him.

PATRICIA

Davis.

She shakes her head.

DAVIS

(Upset)

So what? You just fuck me and that's it?

PATRICIA

Wow. Grow up, dude. This is a good opportunity for your career.

DAVIS

My career was fine.

PATRICIA

You were a model in a lotion commercial.

DAVIS

YOU KNOW WHAT--

Someone clears their throat.

They both turn to find an observant Agatha.

PATRICIA

(Laughing)

Uhm, yes, just like that.

Davis is confused for a second, then catches up.

DAVIS

Okay. Good. I get it now.

PATRICIA

Good, go get ready.

Davis walks off past Agatha, who is looking very unconvinced.

AGATHA

Can't wait to see that part of the play.

PATRICIA

We're thinking of taking it out.

AGATHA

Hmmm.

Beat.

PATRICIA

Could you not have seen that?

Agatha smiles.

AGATHA
Good luck.

Agatha turns and walks off.

Patricia watches her vanish around a corner just as Glosh returns.

GLOSH
I found out where he is.

PATRICIA
(Relieved)
Where?

Glosh's mouth hangs open, unsure of what to say.

4

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

4

On screen: Twelve minutes past opening.

Two muscular men stand cross-armed in front of a car.

Glosh and Patricia stand before them. Scared and confused.

GLOSH
One of the stagehands saw him being
dragged in there.

PATRICIA
Who are these guys?

GLOSH
He mentioned being part of a swim
club.

Patricia looks at Glosh and then the two hulks who are very much not part of a swim club.

A text pings. Mark: *"So are we talking or not?"*

Patricia takes a deep breath and approaches the men.

PATRICIA
Hello.

Silence.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
I understand you have a friend of
mine in there.

Silence.

Beat.

Patricia looks back at Glosh, worried, and Glosh shows her a thumbs up with a smile.

The rear window of the car slides down, and Patricia turns to find a serious-looking man wearing very pronounced sunglasses in the shape of stars and a shiny suit.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
(Under breath)
Of course.

She approaches the car.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Hello.

ZADDY MONEY
Yes?

PATRICIA
Uhm, I think you have my actor.

A tapping comes from the boot of the car.

JACOB
(O.S)
Hey Patty.

Patricia rushes to the trunk.

PATRICIA
Jacob.

JACOB
(O.S)
Hey.

Patricia returns to the window.

PATRICIA
Dude, what the hell?

ZADDY MONEY
He has my money.

PATRICIA
Listen, um, sir.

ZADDY MONEY
Zaddy money.

PATRICIA
(Sigh)
Okay. Uhm, Zaddy...Money. I am sorry to hear about your troubles with Jacob, but I need him for this show. We can work something out after the show, maybe.

JACOB
(O.S., from inside)
Yeah.

Zaddy Money takes a moment to speak, unwrapping a lollipop and putting it in his mouth. He sucks on it for what feels like an eternity as Patricia waits.

ZADDY MONEY
No.

PATRICIA
I need him. Please.

ZADDY MONEY
Then pay.

PATRICIA
How much does he owe you?

ZADDY MONEY
(To Jacob)
Tell her.

JACOB
(O.S)
Oh, ah, you know, a little over
100k.

PATRICIA
What is a little over 100k?

Beat.

JACOB
(O.S)
Seven million.

Patricia rubs her eyes.

PATRICIA
Jacob!

JACOB
I was going to get the money, I
just needed a little time for some
investments to mature.

PATRICIA
What investments?

Beat.

JACOB
(O.S)
Some sports stuff.

PATRICIA
Sports stuff?

Patricia realizes what he means.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Jacob. Are you talking about sports
betting?

JACOB
(O.S)
No!
(Beat)
Yes.

PATRICIA
(Rubbing eyes)
For God's sake.

JACOB
(O.S)
Listen, I had sures.

PATRICIA
We gave you an advance, so why
didn't you use that to deposit
instead of betting on football?

Beat.

JACOB
(O.S)
It was not football.

PATRICIA
What was it?

Silence.

JACOB
(O.S)
Goat races.

Patricia looks at the trunk with anger boiling inside her,
and she slowly returns to Zaddy Money.

PATRICIA
Listen, I have a full house, and we
can pay you as soon as we have
collected all the money, but you
need to release him. Please.

Zaddy Money keep sucking on the sweet. Then...

ZADDY MONEY
There is something you do not
understand about this world.

(MORE)
ZADDY MONEY (CONT'D)
There are the hyenas and the lions,
I am a--

A phone starts ringing with an upbeat ringtone, and Zaddy looks at Patricia, irritated.

PATRICIA
Oh, sorry.

She reaches into her pocket and ends the call.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Please go on.

ZADDY MONEY
I am a lion and---

The phone rings again, and Zaddy Money growls with anger.

PATRICIA
I am so sorry. Let me just---

She turns off the phone.

ZADDY MONEY
Lions, I am---

The phone rings again, and he goes silent.

They look at one another as the phone rings.

PATRICIA
Let me just...

She walks off and goes to answer it a few steps away.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
(Whispering)
What?

SAM
(O.S)
The cleaner is gone. He is not here. And people are starting to get angry.

PATRICIA
Sam, please, find a way. I am handling something else.

SAM
(O.S)
I don't know what to do.

PATRICIA
Break the door if you have to.

SAM

(O.S)
What?

She hangs up and turns to find an angry Zaddy Money.

PATRICIA

Sorry about that. Yes, lions.

ZADDY MONEY

I am not releasing him without
money in cash, and you have fifteen
minutes, or he is gone.

PATRICIA

That is kidnapping.

The gangster shrugs, and the window goes up.

In the distance...

Glosh nervously paces as she waits, and Patricia walks up to
her.

GLOSH

What is it?

PATRICIA

(Sigh)
We need seven million in the next
thirty minutes.

Glosh gasps.

GLOSH

But we don't have that kind of
money.

PATRICIA

(Sarcastic)
Oh my God, I didn't know that.

GLOSH

Sorry.

PATRICIA

No, I'm sorry.

They stand in silence.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Shit.

GLOSH

What?

PATRICIA
I need you to get me someone from
VIP.

5 EXT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

5

On screen: Thirty minutes past opening.

Patricia paces in the room as she fiddles with her watch. She accidentally kicks a toolbox and hops around.

UNCLE BEN
(Behind)
Hey housefly.

Patricia spins to face a smiling middle-aged man.

PATRICIA
Hey, Uncle Ben.

UNCLE BEN
The shaky girl said You needed to
talk to me. Is everything okay? I
know Ugandan things don't start in
time, but you have always been---

PATRICIA
I need seven million.

UNCLE BEN
What?

PATRICIA
There is an emergency, and I know
it is a lot to ask after
everything, but please, I can make
it back if I can just survive
tonight.

The man looks at her with a soft expression.

He walks to her, sits down in one of the chairs, and motions
for her to join him in another close to him.

She does so.

UNCLE BEN
What is going on?

PATRICIA
It's a long story.

Uncle Ben sits back and scans her form, head to toe.

UNCLE BEN
I see more of my sister in you
every day. She could never get her
off a mission when she started.

Patricia smiles.

UNCLE BEN (CONT'D)

But it also destroyed her because she saw nothing else when she wanted something. I don't want to help you make the same mistakes.

PATRICIA

Uncle---

He raises a hand, and she keeps silent.

UNCLE BEN

I have entertained this long enough in honour of your parents but no more. I will give you only half, and this is a loan. You have to grow up, and that will not happen if I keep protecting you.

PATRICIA

Uncle, please, I need---

UNCLE BEN

It is decided.

He stands up and walks off, and she remains seated.

PATRICIA

Uncle?

He stops at the exit and looks back at her.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Did you ever believe in me?

UNCLE BEN

I'm a businessman man my love. I don't believe in anything till I see it and tonight is your chance to show me. I'll send the money when I settle back inside.

He exits.

6

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

6

Patricia sits in silence as she looks at her phone.

Replies to Mark: *"What are we doing?"*

Mark starts typing but stops.

Glosh rushes in and stops when she sees Patricia.

GLOSH

Patricia?

PATRICIA

Yeah.

GLOSH

The tickets.

A message comes in.

3,500,000 UGX was received.

PATRICIA

I'm coming. Let me first get Jacob.

GLOSH

You got the money?

PATRICIA

Not all of it, but hopefully,
they'll take half.

She stands and walks to Glosh.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Tell them I am coming.

She walks out, leaving a concerned Glosh.

7

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

7

On screen: **Fifty-five minutes past opening.**

Patricia walks out of a financial center and into the street.
She is holding an envelope against her chest.

Her phone rings.

PATRICIA

Stacy. I am coming.

STACY

(O.S)

Did you do it?

PATRICIA

What?

STACY

(O.S)

Did you and Davis...you know.

PATRICIA

Stacy, it's complicated.

STACY

(O.S)

Oh, my God, how could you?

PATRICIA
Who told you?

STACY
(O.S)
He did! I can't believe this, you
are so...I don't even know.

PATRICIA
Stacy, listen, we can talk later,
but right now I need you focused
and---

STACY
(O.S)
I can't.

The call is ended.

PATRICIA
Sta...Stacy?

She checks the phone to find a blank screen.

She looks up at the night sky.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
What next?

Just then, a man in a jumper, hood over his head, bumps into
her and grabs the envelope.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Hey!

The man pulls up the jumper by the waist to reveal a knife,
and she freezes in shock.

The man turns and quickly walks off.

Patricia looks at the figure as the distance between them
grows.

Her expression goes from scared to angry.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
No.

She sprints towards the man.

He turns just in time to see her, and he scrambles to get the
knife, but she shoves him to the ground and claws at him.

He covers his face as he keeps attacking. He manages to punch
her and push her off.

She bounces to her feet, blood oozes out of the side of her
lip, hair a mess and eyes wide and wild.

The man gets up to take in the sight with awe.

They both look down to see the envelope on the ground between them.

He makes a step towards it, and she does the same.

BY-PASSER

GWE!

Someone shouts from the distance, and the hooded man gets spooked. He runs away.

Patricia sighs in relief and falls to the ground on her knees, she picks up the envelop and presses it against her chest once more.

8

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

8

Zaddy Money and his goons wait by the car.

JACOB

(O.S., singing)

Knowing me, knowing you, anha,
there is nothing we can do, knowing
me, knowing you, anha--

One of the goons punches the top of the boot.

Jacob mumbles his displeasure.

Zaddy Money notices something in the distance and smiles.

ZADDY MONEY

Ah, see.

A sweating Patricia approaches them with a serious expression.

ZADDY MONEY (CONT'D)

Haha, good girl.

Patricia reaches them. She hands him the envelope.

PATRICIA

I got half. I'll have the rest
after the show.

ZADDY MONEY

What happened to your face?

PATRICIA

Do we have a deal?

He shakes his head.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

I need him

ZADDY MONEY

So give me my money.

Patricia makes to speak but just growls and walks off.

She stops a few steps away. His phone rings and stops her.

She answers.

PATRICIA

Glosh, what the fuck is it now?

GLOSH

(O.S)

People are getting restless here. I don't know what to do.

Patricia is silent.

GLOSH (CONT'D)

(O.S)

Patricia? What do we do?

She ends the call and looks back at the gangsters.

She fiddles with her watch and approaches them.

She gets in Zaddy Money's face. He glares at her.

ZADDY MONEY

What?

She raises her watch to his face. He is confused.

PATRICIA

It's a Patek. You can get at least five million from it.

He takes it and inspects it.

ZADDY MONEY

How do I know you're telling the truth?

PATRICIA

You have all the cards, you know where I am going to be showing my play. If I'm lying. I am sure you can find a way to make me regret it.

Zaddy Money looks at the watch and then Patricia, thinking.

ZADDY MONEY

Hmmm.

He nods to one of the goons, and the large man goes to the trunk. Patricia nods to Zaddy Money and follows the goon.

POV: From inside the boot.

It is opened, and Patricia looks down at the unseen occupant.

JACOB

(O.S)

Heeeey.

PATRICIA

Let's get to makeup now.

JACOB

(O.S)

Help me up.

She rolls her eyes and walks away.

9

I/E. OUTSIDE THEATRE/BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

9

On screen: One hour and seven minutes past opening.

Patricia stands before a door and reaches for her wrist but finds no watch. Her phone pings, and she checks it.

Mark texts: *"I thought we were chilling."*

With a deep breath, she opens the door and walks in.

She makes her way to the place she started backstage and finds the same crowd of people waiting and arguing amongst themselves as Glosh tries to calm them down.

Glosh spots Patricia.

GLOSH

Oh, thank God. Patricia.

The rest of the crowd spots her, and they all come rushing to her.

They all talk at the same time, and Patricia cannot make out what any of them are saying.

PATRICIA

Okay, wait.

They keep talking.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

Listen.

They keep talking.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

(Shouting)

Silence!

Everyone shuts up.

Agatha watches from the back of the crowd.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)

I know tonight is scary, and I am supposed to be your leader and guide you through this, but...you are also adults with a job to do, a job we have practiced for months. Those people out there are here because they trust us to give them a show that will blow their minds. After all, that is what we do, what we dedicated our whole lives to. So I need each and every one of you to put away your fears, your anger, your doubt and trust each other, but more importantly, trust yourselves. You are ready, you have greatness in you...use it. Okay?

She looks at the stunned crowd.

Silence

DAVIS

Yes.

He looks to Stacy, and she reluctantly nods.

Another voice from the crowd says "yes".

More voices join in, and soon it becomes a cheer.

Sam shuffles out of the crowd, anxiously approaches her, and whispers in her ear.

SAM

Madam, the tickets.

Patricia drops the smile, and anger clouds her eyes.

She walks off, leaving the crowd chattering and energized.

10 INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

10

Patricia enters the green room and searches for something.

Her eyes land on the toolbox she was eying earlier, and she goes to it.

Opening it, she gets something out: a hammer.

She stomps out of the room.

11 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

11

Patricia appears from around the corner, followed by Sam and Glosh.

GLOSH
Patty, I don't know if this is a
good idea.

SAM
Madam, we should not damage--

PATRICIA
I am not letting a door get in the
way of my dream.

She gets to a door and swings for the handle.

Glosh and Sam squint in terror as they listen to the banging
till the sound of something metallic falls to the floor.

The sound of a door opening and slamming startles them, They
hear rummaging for a bit and then the sound of stomping
footsteps as Patricia approaches.

She faces both of them with messy hair as she pants, in her
hand, a box.

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
Are these the ones?

Sam nods, and she hands her the box.

He almost speaks, but a look at Patricia's serious face, he
runs away instead.

Glosh steps backwards, turns, and rushes away.

Patricia stands looking into the empty hallway for a moment
then exhales and lowers herself to the floor, back on wall.

She sits there for a spell, looking at nothing into the void.

On screen: One hour and twelve minutes past opening.

Her phone pings, and she checks it.

Mark: "P?"

A figure appears from down the hall and approaches.

She does not notice till the person is a few steps from her.
She sees who it is...

PATRICIA (CONT'D)
You were right.

The figure sits next to her. Agatha.

AGATHA
About?

PATRICIA

In your last article, you said I am not my mother and I might never be as great.

AGATHA

Maybe I was too harsh.

PATRICIA

Hmmm, maybe.

AGATHA

You don't need to be your mother.

PATRICIA

I want to be.

AGATHA

Would she want that?

Patricia slowly shakes her head.

They look at one another and smile. The moment lasts a while as the two seem to have a whole conversation with their eyes.

Agatha gets up.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Come on. You're late.

Patricia shrugs.

Agatha offers a hand, and Patricia takes it. She gets up on her feet.

The two walk down the hall as cheering grows in the distance.

Her phone pings, and she stops to check it.

Mark: *"I think I can make it actually, but only if you want me to come through."*

Mark's name is selected from a list and blocked.

The cheering gets louder as the two women go around a corner.

FADE OUT.

12

CREDITS.

12

Positive headlines about the play being critically acclaimed and profitable flash alongside the credits.