Education is the key... Hardwork pays... *nio nio nio*: Adulting is hard!

Fellow elder, remember the time when they told you, "*oyogezza butto*"? Now you know. For the first in your life, you now understand what Ronald Mayinja meant with '*tuli kubukenke...*'. Now you know what endeared this man to your parents. You go back and listen to classic Chameleone. Oh yes, now you know why your father and mother loved the *ka* man. It is *shida za dunia* in *katupakase* everyday with *bayuda* on the side.

BY IAN ORTEGA

This adulting age has put all of us on a spectrum. Some it has made bipolar, some depressive and some schizophrenic. That happiness at Bandali, it is the only hope when all else has betrayed us, the rules you kept, the path you diligently followed.

It is 7pm, almost a week since I promised the editor that I will pen this piece. I realise that the adulting I am meant to write about is one I am also caught up in.

You know you are in the thick of things when you start to understand why your mother always returned from work and rushed into her bedroom. You are almost tempted to give her a call, and ask, "how did you do it?"

But then you realise if she knew how, she would have told you. Adulting is a fact of life. You just deal with it. You deal with the daily commute, and still show up just in time to give the person in HR a compliment. That compliment matters more than all the hard work you will put up; it could be the thing that stands between you and your next increment.

You open your email and start rehearsing the corporate speak, "as per our last conversation..." You look forward to the next leave, well aware that you will be expected to be reachable throughout that time.

Meanwhile, you see all the other workmates doing just fine. Peter just cruised in with his Touareg, while Martha in Finance just returned from her vacation in Bali. You re-assess your life -"are they being paid more or do I need to take the next financial literacy class." You promise yourself that you will not be giving excuses. You are the problem. If Dorah can do it, so can I. You religiously pay attention as Kakande lays out a plan of layering bonds.

You start escaping from your friends on Friday nights, you want this money to go to that *ka* bond of March. Now you have started the calculus, if I buy a *ka* bond, and in August, I also put up with a ka unit trust, then I am somewhere. Just then, sweet girlfriend calls, "honey, this Dominate, I think I gotta go..." At this point, you must concede something. You played hard guy on Valentine's Day, surely, you cannot fail to do this one-off ticket. As you converse, she keeps hinting about this new hairstyle. You are too clueless to pick the signal that she is also yearning for hair money. With that kind of cluelessness, the next time you see her will be on Kibirige's TikTok responding to the question -"*bikulumye*?"

In this Kenzo maths of yours, you do not realise when the Iran war affects the petrol prices. It is at the pump station when you cause a scene saying you have been beaten air, only to be reminded that your 35K can no longer make a difference. You swallow your shame, drive off, only for the ka car to start over-heating. At this point, your mechanic dreads your phone call, he has told you time and again that you are due for a new car, but you claim you are great at maintaining cars.

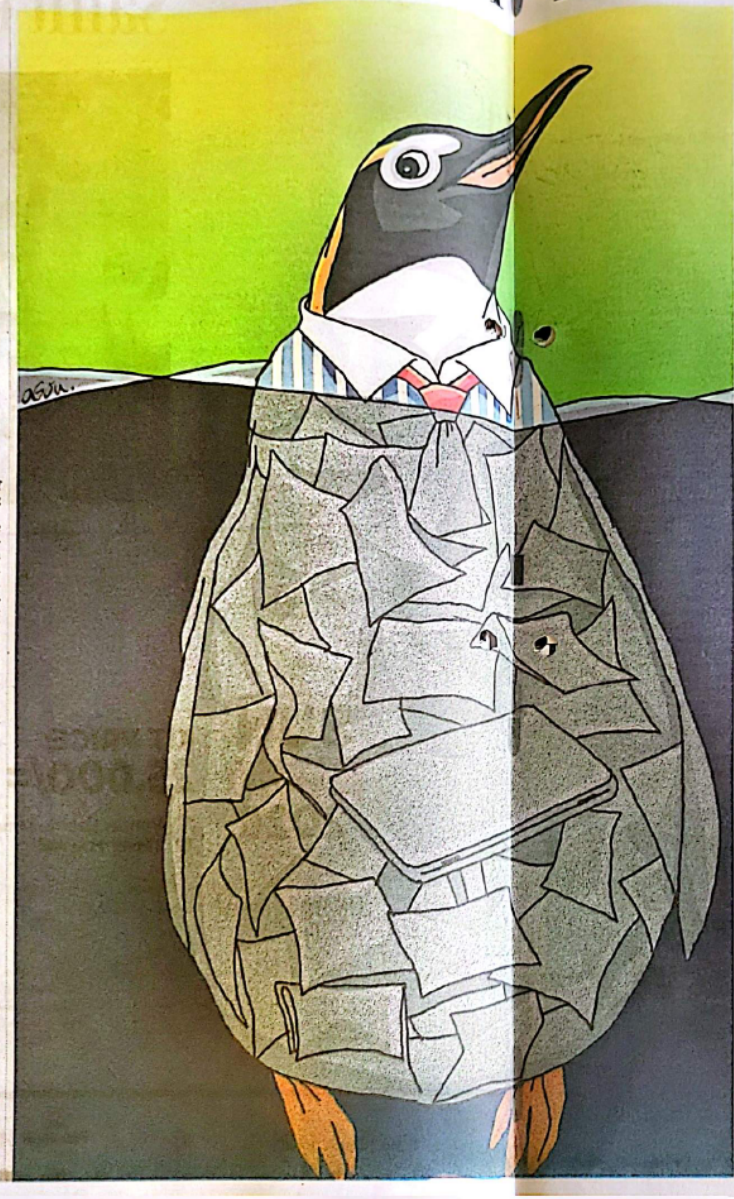
You broke up with your boda guy because he was tired of your non-performing loans.

Despite all this, the Kampala lusting demon has not left you alone. You believe you stand a chance with Prossy in Marketing. Again, it is your failure to pick the signs, she only replies to you in emojis, and only calls you for a fumigation plug. The last time you asked to take her on a date, she told you she was too tired to move, only to watch her updates from brunch. But you praise your God, because you are not about to sweat plasma at a brunch. But you convince yourself, that you and Prossy could be something.

It is now July, you did not buy that bond, nor did you start on the Unit trust. As we speak, you have shifted from Kakande's side, now you are siding with Kakiika. You want to start with land. You have become an expert in the financials. How could you not when you are managing with different loan apps? Another thought hits you, but maybe not land; you could start with the YPA (Youth Platform Africa) goats. In just months, you have gotten an MBA from TikTok. To comfort yourself, you share a WhatsApp status update of Hajji Bakaluba.

Then a call comes in from Daphne, "naye Jose, have you seen Kasuku? I have ordered for microphones, we can start our podcast." You find new hope, you believe you have got lots to tell the world, and cannot wait to pluck money from this YouTube channel. Only for the microphones to arrive and you realise that none of you has got video editing skills.

Meanwhile, you keep shouting, "AI has made everything easy". Meanwhile the most you have done with AI is prompt it to read your astrological signs. Knowing the situation you are in, AI has convinced you that in this age of Aquarius, it is just a matter of time before the stars are all for you.



A wedding invitation comes in, not because they want you at the wedding, but they want you to make a contribution. Just then, your mother calls, "mwana wange, have you now found someone?" But how do you tell her that you have been dealing with her prospective grandchildren in clandestine ways. The last pregnancy scare you got, you even claimed that 'ewamwe temuzala'. But it is all adulting having you by a chokehold.

You start pursuing the idea of escaping Uganda. But just before you do, someone adds you to the PLU group. 'Maybe this is the ka chance to join the eating table. You tell yourself, I will do the PLU gig, and on the side, start on my German classes while applying for the Canadian thing. You forget all you have to yourself is this laptop from the workplace that keeps rebooting at weird moments.

The IT guy beefs you for blinking at Prossy, he is not about to replace your gadget. He claims it is a skills gap, that you are due for a refresher. Anti there is no way someone from Masaka SSS can be good at these things. As chaps discuss traditional schools on X, you watch from *kamooli* and hope this topic does not come up at lunch time.

But again, what is adulting?

Adulting for you has become one panic attack after another. You wake up every day and feel like a machine. Something is always expiring. It is a third party insurance here, driving permit there. NIRA does not help your case, mbu your national ID is now ready at district 69. What the Nansana!

LinkedIn is full of endless progress. Where did you go wrong? You wonder! 'Maybe Apostle is right, there are some generational strongholds to break. *Rakashitabayayaya* you pray. As you threaten your line manager to increase your salary, your line manager is also pleading with their line manager to increase their salary.

What Dennis in procurement does not tell you, is that he has discovered a ka secret formula. And that is how he is keeping up with the world. But he will not tell you; those who know, know. And because of this *ka* formula, Prossy has kicked off a friendship that borders on love with Dennis. Involve me, involve me, you plead. But who will? When you still insist that Kyanja is not the real deal, and keep hyping your Masanafu areacode.

It has now hit you that you will always be billed for everything. If you want a police file, you will be billed. If you cough, you are billed. Your dentist wants to bill you, not because you really did it, but because he also needs it. The *Afande* on the road, he flags you not because he cares about the permit, but because he is ready to bill. When you meet your friends, you rush to bill them before they bill you. Anti it is about who beats the other to saying; "*sooka ompe ku ssente*".

For the first in your life, you now understand what Ronald Mayinja meant with '*tuli kubukenke...*'. Now you know what endeared this man to your parents. You go back and listen to classic Chameleone. Oh yes, now you know why your father and mother loved the ka man. It is *shida za dunia* in *katupakase* everyday with *bayuda* on the side.

You convince yourself that the problem is the LinkedIn that you have not given a refresh. You give it a refresh only for that email to come in..."unfortunately we shall not be progressing... we received a blah blah blah..."

There was a time when they told you, "*oyogezza butto*", now you are the one telling it to the youngins. For the first time you also understand that old dude at the workplace. He was not gatekeeping, he was just warning you. That he was also once like you, energetic, thinking he was the next best thing after sliced bread. He was just like you, excited and ready to change the systems. Now he knows there is no system that you are going to change, but the system will change you so bad you will not even recognise who you were before you entered it. One day you are the HR who hands out letters to fire others, another day you are also shown the same system.

Mbu it is just the game. Hate the game, not the players. This adulting age has put all of us on a spectrum. Some it has made bipolar, some depressive and some schizophrenic. That happiness at Bandali, it is the only hope when all else has betrayed us, the rules you kept, the path you diligently followed.

You also remember your President and realise, maybe dude is also in a chokehold. Like he wants to go, but the chaps are like, "*wewe Mzee, unaenda wapi...*" Maybe he is also just winging it as he goes by. You realise no one has it figured out, the best you can do, is to not look like your problems. We are all penguins just putting up a show.

This my friend is adulting, there was no script. Some have just divorced, others are piling pressure on each other to formalise things. Someone is on their way out of a job, another is celebrating for landing one after years on the streets. And somewhere somehow, a government official just placed their jacket on the chair, and moved out to grab *katogo*, as the citizens wait for his services. He will be back shortly before 3pm to tell everyone that they will be handled tomorrow. And URA will send you a *ka* message that it is all about your taxes, while Ndagire Road in Kamuli reminds you that there is a difference between a road and a *load*...



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