

BLIND TRUST: A NOVELETTE

By Oláwálé Dúródlá

A Novellete

BLIND TRUST

Dúródolá, Oláwálé. Y

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DEDICATION

To everyone who wants to be heard. I say be you and do you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To everyone who has been a part of the D9ty7stories' journey. It has been a bumpy ride, but we keep going. Remilekun Diana, Onike Kehinde, Latifah Yusuf, Ilésanmí Micheal, Taofeek, Khadijah, Kristina, Chiamaka, Desola, Oyindamola, members and executives (past and present) of SYNW, IBBC. Let's keep the flag flying.

I love and appreciate you all,

Dúró

This story was written and published in 2016 in anticipation and dedication for my 19th birthday.

“Trust is hard to come by. That’s why my circle is small and tight. I’m kind of funny about making new friends.” Eminem

“You may be deceived if you trust too much, but you live in torment if you don’t trust enough.”
Frank Crane

PROLOGUE

Michael Ogu sat behind his desk reviewing the book of account for the month. The last assignment before he proceeds on leave ahead of his wedding in five days' time and his honeymoon. He wasn't getting the bogus figures the computer was displaying as his mind was far away thinking of how his wedding would go and the succeeding marriage life would be for him and his heartthrob; Victoria.

The intercom rang jolting him back to his environment.

"Yes?" He said on picking up.

"There is a man here sir asking to see you." His secretary said through the receiver.

"What's his name?" Michael asked.

"He said Clement Adeoye." The secretary replied.

The name rang a bell in Michael's memory. He felt he had heard the name somewhere, and since he couldn't place where, there is only one way to find out; meeting the man bearing the name.

"Send him in." Michael said before dropping the intercom.

He would not be disappointed if the man in question turned out to be a representative of the company planning his upcoming wedding.

"Come in." He said once there was a knock on the door.

The door into the office opened and a well-built man walked in clad in a white shirt, a black pants trouser and a black shoe.

"Michael Ogu?" The man asked.

“Yes.” Michael replied, rising to shake hands with the man.

“You do not remember me, do you?”

“Not at all, even though the name sounds familiar.” Michael replied.

“Think! Try and remember the name.” Clement urged with a huge grin.

“Bring me out of my misery. It’s not working.” Michael gave up.

Clement gave a short laugh.

“St Gregory college, Obalende 2001 graduating set.” Clement replied.

“Oh my God! Clems! Ade Clems!” Michael exclaimed as he hugged his old classmate.

The two friends hugged for a while as memories of the past kept coming back to them in a rush. The two friends used to be a part of a group known as the Fantastic five back in the days. A group of five boys who ruled the school then, notorious but brilliant. Michael was regarded as the leader of the group then and after graduating from secondary school, four of them still maintained contact, while certain circumstances led to Clement breaking away from the group and subsequently incommunicado.

“How have you been bro?” Clement asked.

“Where have you been is the way to go.” Michael replied laughing.

“I went to the states immediately after High school and I returned back home less than two months ago.”

“Seriously bro, you couldn’t even reach out to us.” Michael complained.

“Sorry brother. I am very sorry.” Clement replied.

“I’m done with work today. Let’s go grab a drink or two.” Michael suggested.

“I’m down for you bro.” Clement replied.

Michael immediately shut down his computer, grabbed his car key and stepped out with his friend.

“Dorcas, see you tomorrow.” Michael said to his secretary who only nodded without taking her eyes off the computer screen.

At the parking lot, Michael unlocked the doors of his black Toyota Prado.

“Did you come here in your car?” He asked Clement who shook his head in the negative.

The two men hopped into the car as Michael drove off.

“You have really done well for yourself.” Clement remarked.

“Everyone has done well for themselves. Umar is a Naval officer, Sadiq works in an oil company, George owns a TV station downtown. And as you saw in there, I work as the accountant general in a leading multinational company. What about you?”

Clement kept quiet for a few seconds as his breathing increased. “Are you good?” Michael asked.

“Sure.” Even his response seemed laboured.

Michael shrugged as he focused his attention on the road.

“Do you remember what happened that night?” Clement asked. “What night Clems?”

“What night Clems?”

DORA BAR & LOUNGE

The trio of Umar, Sadiq and George sat at a table at their favourite bar. The only place they unwind after a stressful day at work.

“Is Mike coming today?” Sadiq asked.

“Why not?” Umar replied.

“I think he should reduce his hanging for now until his wedding is over.” Sadiq said.

“Come off it bro. I am married too, and I remembered coming here with you guys one the eve of my wedding.” George spoke for the first time.

“That was before we met Jesus.” Umar replied a laughter erupted at their table. Sadiq had his head bent over his phone as he did only God knows what.

“Here we go again.” George began as soon as he noticed Sadiq. “Just because you get messages from work every minute doesn’t mean you should ignore your friends at a time like this. “I get calls too and the last time I checked, the programme being aired on that TV over there is from my TV. And I am not even watching it. That’s my business, and I am not keeping tabs on it. But you, you work for the government, yet you make it seem like your father owns the Naval force.”

“Sorry bro.” Sadiq apologized. “It’s just that duty calls and I have to go.” “Here we go again. Every night you have to go.” Umar complained.

“When I was with Silverbird, common sense didn’t tell them that I needed break every once in a while. I resigned when I realized I was being over worked and floated my own TV outfit. Here I am today.” George said.

Umar who got the joke burst into laughter.

“First of all, did you just diss the Silverbird CEO?” He asked.

“Of course not, he remains my boss.” George replied.

“And are you suggesting that Sadiq float his own Naval force? Like seriously George?” Umar asked.

“About that, I don’t know.” George replied.

“The man is drunk.” Sadiq said to Umar. “Obviously.” Umar replied.

Sadiq stood up as he gulped the content of his cup. “Astagafurullah! I promised God not to drink again. I hope to keep it this time.” He said.

“You’ve been making that promise since last year.” Umar mocked. “Hey! Guys.” Michael popped up into their midst with a grin.

“Clems, how far?” George asked.

“Thirty kilometres.” Michael replied and they all laughed.

“The groom to be.” Sadiq said. “Unfortunately I have to go now.”

“Why?” Michael asked.

“Duty calls.” Sadiq replied.

“Okay guys. Just before Sadiq leaves, I have a surprised for you guys.” All attention drawn to him.

“See who I have with me.” Only then did the men notice the man standing behind him.

“Who is he?” George asked.

“Look at him very well. Is the face any familiar?” Michael asked.

“Quit the games bro and tell us.” Sadiq who obviously was in a hurry spoke up.

“Okay, Adeoye Clement. Ever heard the name?”

Silence befell their table as each of the guys tried to place the name.

“I meet a lot of people every day. It is not my job to memorize their names.” George replied.

“Wait!” Umar said, loud enough for all of them to hear. “Saint Gregory college?” He asked. “Way to go man.” Clement spoke for the first time as he shook hands with Umar.

Clement in turn shook hands with each of them. Even though Sadiq was still slow in processing the name.

“Is he a fantastic?” He asked.

“Yeah. The fifth guy.” Clement replied as he took his hand in his once again.

Sadiq excused himself while the four men settled down to catch up.

“Where have you been man?” “What do you do now?” “Are you married or still chasing the chicks all over?” Were the questions the guys threw at Clement who in turn asked each of them the same.

“I am happily married with a girl.” George replied. “I am still single to the core.” Umar replied.

“He is still in love with crude oil.” George joked.

“I am engaged and billed to....” Michael was saying.

“Get married in five days’ time.” Clement cuts in.

It was the turn of the men to stare in disbelief at their long ‘lost’ friend. “It’s all over the internet man.” Clement replied.

“I don’t reckon posting anything about my wedding on the internet.” Michael said.

“Probably your wife did.” Clement defended weakly. “You know my wife?” Michael asked.

“Does it matter?” He asked.

“Yeah, it does.” Michael replied.

“I think the invite is on the school’s alumni page on Facebook.” “Exactly.” Clement replied.

Michael gave him a strange look before returning to his drink.

The men continued with their drink as they chatted loudly. “Does any of you still remember what happened that night back in school?” Clement asked.

“What night?” Umar and George asked.

“He asked me the same question before we got here.” Michael replied.

“It’s a pity.” Clement shook his head. “Let us forget it.”

“Mike, I think Clems would make a good groomsman.” Umar suggested. “Not so soon.” George kicked.

Two hours later, the four men walked back to the parking lot. “Clems, let’s do this again tomorrow.” Umar suggested.

“Sure.” Clement replied.

“You are headed towards the airport road right?” Umar asked. “Let me drop you off.”

As Umar drove out of the car park, George who was already inside his car quickly alighted and walked up to Michael. “I don’t trust that dude.” He said.

“Me neither. Except for old time sake.” Michael replied.

“Cos I don’t know how he knew about your wedding. No one posted nothing on the alumni page.” George revealed. “Just be careful.” He added.”

THE COUNTDOWN

Clement’s POV

Umar brought his car to a halt outside the hotel I am currently lodged at. “This is where you live?” He asked. “An hotel?”

“I just got back.” I replied. “From?” He asked.

“The States.” I replied.

We exchanged numbers inside the car before I stepped out and made my way into the hotel.

I have five days to achieve my aim, my goal. Just five days! The reason I returned to Nigeria. Tomorrow is day 1 and the countdown begins until the last day; DAY 5.

DAY 1

VENUE: DORA BAR & LOUNGE

The trio of Umar, Sadiq and George were seated around their usual spot. Against the four chairs that used to be at the table, a fifth chair has been added on request.

“Dude is really great.” Umar remarked.

“He seems cool, but you suggesting that Mike put him among the men in suite is crazy.” I mean, we are only just meeting him yesterday since over a decade. And just like that?” George poured out.

“Calm down man. I merely suggested. Mike can decide not to.” Umar defended.

“No, you didn’t give him the chance.” George replied.

“How?” Umar asked.

“You made it obvious that Mike needs one more groomsman. And you said it in the presence of Clement. So, obviously, Clement knows that one more person is needed and it is normal for Mike to put him in. Think bro.” George explained.

“Well, it’s not a big deal really.” Umar replied.

“Sadiq, you are unusually quiet tonight. Any problem?” “Nothing.” Sadiq replied.
Just then Clement walked in. “Hey! Guys.” He said. “Sorry am late.” He apologized.

“That’s not a problem.” Umar replied.

George called on the waiter who quickly came to take orders. “Mike’s not here yet?” Clement asked.

Just then George’s phone vibrated. He picked it up and spoke up. “Mike said he won’t be coming tonight.” He announced.

“Quite unusual.” Umar remarked.

“Did he give any reason?” Clement asked.

“Not at all.” George replied.

Their discussion somewhat graduated into Politics, and as expected of an American returnee, he had a lot to say about Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump.

“Would you prefer another Clinton at the White house or a Trump?” George asked.

“Clinton it is for me. Trump is crazy and such a man occupying the White house is going to be disastrous.” Clement replied.

“You are a democrat?” Umar asked. “Obviously.” Clement replied.

“Excuse me guys.” George said as he stood up to answer his ringing phone.

Once he was gone, Clement faced Sadiq who was absent the previous night. “Do you remember what happened that night just before we left Gregory?” He asked.

“What night?” Sadiq asked, confusion written all over his face.

“He asked the same question last night.” Umar replied, just in time when George returned.

“Aren’t you done with this issue?” He asked.

“He wasn’t there when I asked yesterday.” Clement replied. “But since he doesn’t remember too, I’ll just let sleeping dogs lie.”

One hour later, Clement who surprised his friends by ordering for spirits, instead of beer which they have been drinking. Stood up and staggered backward.

“I have to go.” He announced.

“Like this?” Umar asked.

“That’s a joke bro.” Sadiq added.

“Let me drop you off.” Umar offered. “No, I came with a car.” Clement replied.

“Are you sure you can drive?” George asked. “Sure.”

He bade his friends farewell before walking out of the bar. As soon as he entered his car, his phone beeped.

“All is set.” The message reads.

He smiled as he fastened his seat belt, switched on the ignition of the car and with one swift move, made a U-turn and sped off.

INSIDE MICHAEL'S APARTMENT

Michael stood next to the kitchen wall as his wife-to-be, Christy, prepared dinner.

“Seriously darling. I don’t think it is a good idea. We don’t even know this guy.” She complained.

“I know him.” Michael replied.

“No you don’t. You actually think you do because you used to be friends. He just showed up after ten years and you think you know him. Think again baby.”

“So what do you suggest?” Michael asked.

“Don’t put him among your men in suit.”

“Let me just put him. It’s just for a day.” Michael replied.

“We are not even married and you are putting up a new behaviour. I feel like I don’t know you anymore.” With this, she walked out of the kitchen.

Michael only smiled as he brought out his phone and dialled a number.

“Hello Clems! Can we meet up later tonight? The pub beside my office will be a perfect idea. Call me when you get there.” He dropped a voice message.

“You are going to please yourself, aren’t you?” Christy asked as she walked back into the kitchen.

“Baby, listen to me.” Michael began.

“You know what? I’m leaving.” She announced. “The stew is almost done, take it down and serve yourself.” She added as she walked out.

Michael immediately followed her. “What the hell is wrong with you?” He asked.

“I’m not coming here again till after the wedding. The stew should last you for two days, by then your family members would have arrived and food shouldn’t be a problem.” She announced as she picked up her handbag and walked out.

VENUE: DOLPHIN ESTATE

Umar was driving on the deserted road within his estate of residence and he hummed silently to the series of Bruno Mars’ songs playing on his car stereo. He matched the break as a truck had been parked blocking the road. “Who the hell owns this truck.” He thought. Why would a truck block the road where his Range Rover sport is supposed to pass? He contemplated getting out of the car to find out why the truck was parked in such a bizarre manner. But security-wise, he thought against it. At the other end of the road, a man was dressed in a black, latex overall. A face mask adorned his face,

while he had a cap to cover his head. His hands were covered in similar latex gloves and his legs in a black tennis wears.

He walked out of his hiding place towards his target's car, a Range Rover sport. Umar could see the masked man walking towards his car, and instantly, he knew everything was not right. He alighted from his car and made to take to his heels, but the masked man was quick to grab his hand.

"Stand back here you fool." The masked man said. At the same time bringing out a knife to cut his victim's hand.

"Who the fuck are you?" Umar yelled.

"Your past has come back to haunt you. Being mischievous as a kid doesn't pay off most of the time." The masked man said.

"What past?" Umar asked, still hurting from his cut.

"This....." The masked man said as he stabbed him twice in the chest and letting him fall to the ground."

Sure that his victim is dead, he immediately took off into his truck and sped off. Removing his attire as he walked away.

Forty minutes later, Clement was walking out of the pub with Clement beside him. "Seriously bro, I never thought you'd put me in your men in suit." Clement said.

"We have come from way back bro." Michael replied.

"I really appreciate it." Clement said.

"It's getting late and I need to get back home."

"Same here." Clement replied. Just in time when Michael's phone rang.

"Hello. Yes, you are on with Michael." He answered the caller. "What?" He screamed.

DAY 2

George drove to the scene where Umar's dead body lay. The trio of Michael, Sadiq and Clement were already at the scene.

"What happened?" He asked as soon as he alighted from the car.

"We've been here since last night bro. We found him dead." Clement replied. "You haven't called the police?" George asked.

"Trust me, I did. They are yet to come and they gave orders that we must not touch the body." Sadiq replied.

"That's crazy. Have you called his family?" George asked.

"That's his elder brother." Sadiq replied pointing to a man who stood beside Michael.

Just then, sirens could be heard as a police van and an ambulance drove into the scene. "Everybody stand back." The policemen ordered as they started securing the perimeter.

The photographer attached to the police team started taking pictures as the medical team in the ambulance prepared how to carry the body. Clement moved closer to the body against the policemen's order, and just popping out of Umar's pocket was a paper. He removed it and read the content.

1/5 = 4 The content reads.

"What the fuck?" Clement exclaimed as he walked up to George.

"What's that?" George asked. "I found this in his pocket."
George collected the paper and read the content.

"What the fuck is this?" He asked. "Officer, please come and check this." He called on one of the policemen.

“There is only one scenario and just as Mister George explained. You guys are five in number and one just got killed, that could only mean everyone else in this group is not safe. But we cannot conclude just like that. We will have to investigate the matter and see where it leads us to. But until then, we will attach a police team to protect you guys.”

“That cannot be true.” Clement replied. “How?” The police boss turned to face him.

“We used to be a group of five ten year ago. But over the years, I was out the country and out of reach. I recently returned to the country. Silently and unceremoniously. And only yesterday did I get to meet with me old friend, therefore, I think nobody would be targeting five people. Even my friends have forgotten me until I showed up yesterday.” He explained.

“That’s kind of right.” George replied.

9PM ON THE SAME DAY

Sadiq was packing his bags as he has been instructed to report to full duty by his commandant. His long term girlfriend, Amina walked into the living room where he was lacing his shoes.

“Baby, you have been tying that one lace since I went inside. You are still not done.” She complained. But Sadiq was far away.

“Baby.” She called, but got no response.

“Sadiq.” She shook him this time around and he jerked out of reverie.

“Yes?” He snapped.

“Are you okay?” She asked. “You look lost.”

“Of course, I’m fine.” He replied standing up as he adjusted his uniform.

“You don’t look it. See, if it is about Umar, I will want you to cheer up. Everybody knows the kind of job you do and you have no choice than to obey your commandant. If you have the means, I know you would have stayed behind. But not to worry, I will visit his girlfriend from time to time to keep her company.”

“I love you.” Sadiq whispered as he kissed her. BY the time the kiss ended, she was crying already.

“Please stay safe for me. I hope peace returns to the North east soon.” She said.

“I will surely miss you.” Sadiq replied. “Me too.”

They both made their way out of the house to where his car was parked. A Mercedes Benz G-wagon.

“Do not think much about Umar. He is gone and you cannot afford to be distracted by that.

Remember, you cannot afford to lose concentration in a war front.”

“Of course darling. I see you are starting to think like someone in the force.” Sadiq said. The lover birds bursted into laughter. Just then the sound of a gunshot could be heard.

“What’s that?” Amina asked, but the blood on her night gown sent shivers down her spine.

Sadiq was holding unto his car for support as blood tickled out from only God knows where in his body.

“Sadiq.” Amina screamed, but a blow hit her hard across the face.

“Please don’t kill him.” She pleaded with a masked man who slit Sadiq’s throat with one swing of his hand and more blood oozed out of his neck.

DAY 3

“First it was Umar, and now Sadiq. I don’t understand anymore.” Michael lamented.

“And to say all these are happening just days to your wedding.” George remarked. “Giving the journalists something to write and feed on.” He added.

“It is just so sad. So sad.” Clement commented. “Just shut up.” George said.

“What?” Clement asked in shock.

“You know I have always been a bit sceptical about you. Even back then at school, and guess what? I still haven’t change how I look at you. We were the fantastic, we made things happen. We were notorious, yet very brilliant. You are the rogue amidst us then, the thug, the one with the dirty dealing.” George poured out.

“That’s enough G.” Michael tried to cut in.

“Stay out of this Mike. Please.” George cuts him.

“Are you trying to blame me for the deaths?” Clement asked.

“Oh! Yeah, because the minute you showed up, it was trouble. First you were asking some silly question about some goddam night and the next thing, people started dying.” George wasn’t done.

“Mike, did you hear that? Seriously?” Clement who was still keeping his cool asked.

“George, let me see you in camera.” Michael requested as he walked towards the exit door. George tried to protest, but Michael would have none of that.

Once they were outside, Michael tried to check if anyone was eavesdropping on them. He looked through the window, and once he discovered that Clement was still seated like he was. He returned to face George.

“What was that for?” He asked.

“Mike, don’t start please. You are to reserve to notice somethings. In fact, you are too cool. I work in the media, and I know not to trust people. That guy is not to be trusted.” George replied.

“George, not trusting him means been on a lookout for any moves from him. You just accused him in there bro. You just did. That’s wrong.”

George gave a snotty laugh. “Do you know what happened that night “What night?” Michael asked.

“The question our dear friend Clement has been asking. The night in question.” George replied. “No.” Michael answered.

“Come with me.” George said.

The two men walked out of the compound and after walking a little distance down the road, George crossed over to a bar.

“We can talk here.”

9PM

Michael walked out of the bar with George closely behind him. The two friends have spent hour talking about the possible answer to Clement’s question. Or at least what George thought is the answer.

“I don’t think Clement is capable of killing anyone.” Michael replied. He has been defending Clement from the start.

“Then how do you explain his sudden reappearance, his question and the deaths?” George asked.

“It could be mere coincidence.” Michael replied.

“It is no coincidence man.” George argued. “But I though you do not trust the guy too? How come you are defending him?”

“It is true that I don’t trust him, but that doesn’t warrant me to accuse him of murdering our friends.”

“I am not pointing accusing fingers. I am only putting two and two together.” “Doesn’t seem like it.” Michael replied.

“Give it a thought.” George said. “I’ll just pick up my car and go home.” He added.

“Do you think that’s safe?” Michael asked.

“Even if it’s not, I have to be home. Dara just called me that Christa is sick.” George replied, referring to his wife and daughter.

“Okay then.”

Immediately the two men entered Michael’s apartment, George hopped into his car, said his ‘goodnight’ and revved the car out of the compound.

Michael walked into his apartment. Only then did he remember that they left Clement behind when they stepped out hours ago.

He picked up his phone to call George.

“Hello man! Remember Clems was in the house when we stepped out?” He asked. “I bet you didn’t meet him when you returned.” George replied.

“How did you know?” Michael asked.

“Someone like him walks suspiciously as he has shown so far. And today is not any different.” George replied.

“I don’t understand the guy anymore.” Michael said.

“As if you ever understood him.” George replied.” You met this guy four days ago after over ten years, and you dare talk about understanding.” He added.

Michael, who is not willing to go through another of such discussion, quickly moved to end the call. “My regards to Chris and her mum.” He said.

“Alright man. Goodnight.” And the phone went off.

Michael threw himself on the closest couch and no sooner had he sat down that his eyes caught a book on the table. A book he is sure wasn’t there before. He stood up wondering who dropped the book on his table. CAR BURSTING TRICKS reads the title.

“What kind of book is this?” He thought as he flipped through the table of contents.

Who reads books like this? He asked himself as he opened to the first page which had the heading; UNLOCKING A CAR DOOR WITHOUT KEYS

George was driving at a relatively high speed on the main road as his car stereo played solemn gospel songs. The second thing he uses to unwind. If he is not out drinking with his friends, he will just drive around for a while, all windows wound up to block outside noise, and just listen to either gospel or R N B songs.

He slowed down immediately he heard rumped movement from the back of the car.

“Do I have company inside this car?” He thought. “Probably rats.” He laughed at his own thought.

Who would blame him? After all, the car belonged to his wife and it is uses regularly when shopping. And rats are fond of finding their ways into foodstuff store.

“You do have company.” A croaky voice replied from behind, causing George to match the break suddenly, which sent the car swerving off the road.

George bravely looked at the rear mirror with the hope of seeing whomever the voice belonged to. But he saw nothing which sent shivers down his spine. He opened the car door and stepped out from the car, exactly the same time the trunk opened and a masked man stepped.

“What do you want?” George asked.

“Shouldn’t you ask me who I am?” The masked man replied laughing. “I don’t need to ask you because I know who you are.” George replied. “Tell me.” The man asked.

“Clement?” George said.

The masked man laughed really hard. Even though laughter was meant to bring relief, but every time he laughed, it sends new fears down George’s spine.

“You seem to have issues with a lot of people. You have with me and Clement, whoever he is.” The man remarked.

“You mean you are not Clement?” George asked. “Do I sound like Clement?” The masked man asked.

“Voice can be deceptive.” George replied, his confidence level coming back up. “Who has been killing my friends then?”

“Me.” The masked man answered.

“Why did you kill them? Do you know them?”

“I know a lot of people really. But I have problems with you, and I need to kill your friends to weaken you and here you are looking dead already.” The masked man replied.

“What issues? And why would you kill innocent people?” “Because you all contributed to what I am today.”

MICHAEL’S POV

I sat down on my bed reading thinking about my discussion with George earlier in the day and what he told me about Clement and his involvement in the death of Umar and Sadiq.

FLASHBACK: 2001

VENUE; ST GREGORY COLLEGE, OBALENDE

A young Umar was standing outside the SS3 class when his friends, Clement, Michael, George came over to him.

“How did it go?” Umar asked.

“We were exonerated, but we put it all on Sadiq.” Clement replied. “Poor Sadiq. I feel bad right now.” Michael said.

“Don’t feel sad. Remember we are playing a game.” Clement said. “For six years we have tormented the whole school, put people into trouble. And now is the time to do the same for ourselves. We have collectively put Sadiq into trouble, next time it may be you or me. What matters most is; each of us must be punished for committing an offence before we start our final exam. We must make sure of that.” He summed.

His friends exchanged looks that showed they are not really in support of it.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea.” Umar spoke up. “Let us be thankful that Sadiq was asked to cut the grasses. What if a more serious punishment is meted out to the rest of us?” He asked.

“Like expulsion.” George added. “Your luck bro.” Clement replied.

Two days later, no one was expecting a fightback from Sadiq who already picked interest in paying Clement back as soon as possible. Therefore, on his way to school, he bought a wrap of Marijuana from a Mallam in a secret hideout on the main road and once in got to school, he made for Clement’s bag and poured the content all over. Shortly after lunch break, Sadiq led the School Principal into their class.

“We heard some of you have started smoking Marijuana within the school premises.” The Principal began. “Thanks to Sadiq here who intimidated us.” The man added.

“Adeoye Clement.” The Vice principal who was part of the principal’s entourage called.

At first, the class was thrown into shock, but seconds later, they grew over the shock. First of all, they never expected Clement to smoke within the school premises, but considering his character, he is capable of smoking and his disregard for rules can make him smoke even in front of the Principal. None of the other Fantastic tried to plead on behalf of Clement, after all it was a game. And more so, pleading will amount to them confessing to the authorities that it was a game, and Sadiq who put the Marijuana inside his bag would be punished. That will be two punishments on Sadiq alone. And to avoid that, the status quo must remain. A game it shall remain.

PRESENT DAY

After two weeks of deliberation, Clement was expelled from Saint Gregory college. This came a week before the commencement of their final exams. Meaning Clement couldn’t graduate with his O’levels and he had to run away from his guardian’s house and couldn’t return to his Parents. He became somewhat of a homeless boy and even though he was never a smoker, he had to become one to be accepted by the bad boys gang on the street. How he made it to America is unknown to everybody, but what matters most is; he is probably back to revenge what happened a decade ago.

BUT, IS HE JUSTIFIED?

Michael let his mind wander back and forth and after a minute, he settled on the book he found earlier in his living room. The book is titled; CAR BURSTING TRICKS with one of its contents based on; UNLOCKING A CAR DOOR WITHOUT KEYS.

It hit Michael like a punch to the chest. Putting two and two together, he realized George may be right about Clement after all. If truly Clement dropped the book, he must have used the trick to enter George's car.

Without thinking, Michael jumped out of bed, raced into the living room where he picked his car key. And as he waded out of the apartment, he was calling the Police commissioner's direct line.

"Please sir, deploy as many men as possible to the road connecting to the home address I sent you earlier. I think George is in Danger.

VENUE: CLARA BEAUTY PARLOR

Nothing is going to stop her wedding this weekend, and as such, here was Christy with her friends going through rigorous transformation at the hottest beauty shop on the Island.

"Babes, seriously I am scared o." Christy confided in her best friend who is also doubling as her chief bridesmaid.

"I am too, but I know God is in control." Her best friend replied.

"I just pray there are no more dramas until my big day has come and gone." Christy prayed. "Amen o." All the ladies chorused.

"And I just wish Umar and Sadiq were still alive to witness the big day. Maybe they would start making plans about their wedding when they see how beautiful wedding can be." Christy remarked as hot tears rolled down her cheeks.

"We should get you home." Her best friend said standing up. "But we are not done yet." One of the spa attendants pointed. "And we are leaving. Can't you see this is not a good time?"

A security man walked into the hall.

"There is a man demanding to see Miss Christina." He announced. "A man? Who?" Christina's best friend asked.

"He said he is Clement." The security man replied.

"Oh! Michael's friend. Let me go and see him." Christy said standing up. "Stay safe." One of the ladies spoke.

"I am always safe." Christy replied.

Once she was outside, she saw Clement standing beside a Chevrolet truck and she approached him. His looks didn't change one bit. She thought as she walked towards him. She could remember him hitting on her everyday from SS1 when she started puberty development till SS3 when he stopped coming to school.

"Hi." She greeted with a smile.

“Hi. I know Mike must have told you some things and you yourself must have concluded that I am a bad person, but trust me I am not.” He began.

“What are you talking about?” She asked. Even though she knew she was the one who kicked against Michael making him one of the men in suite. She wasn’t going to say that now.

“Oh! Sorry.” He realized his forwardness and quickly made amends. “It’s been a long time. Why are you here?” Christy asked.

“Michael is in the hospital.” He announced.

“What?” She tried her best not to scream.

“I guess the stress was too much on him. Plus, the emotions, so he collapsed about one hour ago.” Clement explained.

Christy immediately brought out her phone and dialled Michael’s number. “Hello darling.” She said immediately he picked up.

“This is not a goodtime.” Michael replied immediately. Even his breath sounded laboured. Further confirming Christy’s friends.

“Why didn’t you call to tell me?” She asked.

“Nothing has been ascertained or confirmed yet.” Michael replied, distress evident in his voice before the line went dead.

Christy faced Clement. “You know the hospital right?” She asked. “Of course.” He replied.

“Take me there.” She said.

Clement led her to his truck with a satisfactory smile on his face.

BACK INSIDE THE SPA

“Who is this Clement?” The same lady who told Christina to be saved asked. “Didn’t you hear Christy say Michael’s friend?” The chief bridesmaid asked.

“I thought Mike has just George, Umar and Sadiq?” The same lady asked.

“I don’t know about that.” The Chief bridesmaid replied.

“I can’t believe we let Christy leave. During this perilous time?” The lady screamed. “We need to find her.”

The ladies rushed out to see the tail light of Clement’s car leaving the compound. They all rushed into one of their cars and followed.

CLEMENT'S POV

"Now I have her in my custody. All I need to do now is draw Michael out tomorrow when he must have noticed her absence." He thought as he brought out his phone to send a text message.

"Today is day 3, tomorrow is day 4. I am taking Michael out tomorrow. Prepare my return ticket. I am returning to Detroit on day 5." He sent.

ST NICHOLAS HOSPITAL

Michael sat at the reception deep in thoughts. He was crying, but he tried not to show it. After all, George's wife and sick daughter were beside him and he needed to be strong for them.

"The doctors are not saying anything." George's wife said. "Is my husband dead?" She asked. "He is not dead. He is in a coma and should be up any moment from now." Michael replied.

"I want to see my daddy." George's three-year-old daughter said.

"You see now; you have to be strong for little Christa." He said. "Your daddy will be out soon."

Just then, Clement walked into the hospital. To say Michael was shocked would be an understatement. He was convinced that Clement has been responsible for the death of their friends and of course, the latest attack on George. But he had sent him a text message nonetheless asking him to meet him at the hospital. He hadn't expected him to show up but he did which was all Michael needed to conclude that Clement was innocent after all.

And going by the note which was found inside Umar's pocket. $1/5 = 4$

It could only mean that the killer was out to kill the five of them. He has killed Umar and Sadiq. George is in coma after the killer had shot him twice, but luckily he didn't die. As the killer had to run away immediately he heard voices.

"How is he?" Clement asked. "He is not dead, is he?" He asked. "No. But currently unconscious." Michael replied.

"Fair enough. At least we are not losing another friend." He wished he meant it. "Who is this?" George's wife asked.

"Clement. Our good friend." Michael replied.

"And you must be George's wife." Clement said, shaking hands with the woman. "George is a very good friend. We are very close and we trust each other." He added.

Michael only smiled.

"But how come I am just meeting you?"

“He just returned from the state.” Michael puts in.

Just then a team of policemen ran into the hospital reception. “Stand back Mr Michael.” One of the officers said.

Michael who was caught unawares stood still as he tried to know what is going on.

“Michael please stand back.” The leader of the police team, an acquaintance of Michael urged. “You are under arrest Clement.” He added.

“That is not happening. That cannot be true.” Michael replied.

Clement suddenly grabbed Michael and shielded himself with him. “It is true mate.” He whispered in Michael’s ear.

By now he has brought out a handheld revolver.

“You take any further step, I kill him.” Clement threatened as the policemen withdrew a bit.

“It’s over man. The whole hospital is surrounded.” “The fire exit is too?” Clement asked.

The inspector leading the police team looked on in horror. Immediately he brought out his walkie- talkie. “Extraction team, cover the fire exits. Over!” He said, but Clement had his moves planned.

He released two quick shots into the air as he dragged Clement along with him towards the exit. The policemen could do nothing. Once he broke the fire exit, he dropped Clement and fled out. As if on cue, the policemen rained series of gunshots at him, but he was out already.

DAY 4 TIME: 1AM

Even though he wasn't going to admit it, Clement knew his game was up. He had played mind games which successfully worked on Michael, but unfortunately, he failed to realize that a lot of people are becoming interested in the case. He bit more than he could chew, and here he was with a gunshot wound to the leg and a bleeding leg. He had succeeded in dragging himself through the bushes from the hospital, and here he was in front of the pathway connecting to his hideout inside another thick bush. He could no longer move, but he had to, even if it meant dying in the process.

He opened the door into the cabin and walked into one of its compartments, but rather than find a tied Christina, all he found was the rope he used in tying her.

Did anybody come here? He thought. But who could have discovered this place and be so bold to untie that bitch? He asked himself.

He knew he was supposed to kill Michael at the hospital, but he couldn't. He couldn't kill the man who trusted him so much. He just couldn't. But he was going to console himself by raping his fiancée to death, but as it stands now, that is not happening. George is going to die anyways. Sooner or later.

I cannot call myself a loser. He concluded. "I should just avert my plans for today and make plans to return to Detroit." He said aloud.

He dragged himself out and only then did he notice a white Toyota highlander. He remembered seeing the SUV at the Spa. Obviously, he had let his guard down, he let Christina's friends follow him up to his hideout.

They are women, I can kill them. He thought but over fifteen policemen appeared from inside the bushes.

"It's over man." Truly it is, but not without a last fight.

He fired shots sporadically at the policemen, but for every shot, ten shots hit him all over. He fell down fighting to hold onto his life.

"Hadiza!" Christina screamed out the name of her friend who was hit by the bullet from Clement.

It was the same lady who asked her to be safe. The one who knew everything was wrong the moment Christy stepped out to meet the supposed friend of Michael.

THE END

“Love all, trust a few, do wrong to no one.” William Shakespeare

“Trust yourself, create the kind of self that you will be happy to live with all your life. Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny, inner sparks of possibility into flames of achievement.” Golda Meir