

**THE RUBICON**

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**DECLARATION**

This project is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of any degree in another university:

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Signature: ..... Date: .....

Second Supervisor: Prof. D.H. Kiiru

Signature: ..... Date.....

## **DEDICATION**

This work is most sincerely dedicated to Albert Raju who shall forever remain sweet memories. Your loss was devastating and I am yet to get used to it. Your memories will keep me going but I know you are free of cancer and you didn't give up the fight you simply let the Lord have his way. When I look around I see you in all the lovely things. You are the brightest star in the sky, the loveliest rose there ever will be, the butterfly that touches all the sweet smelling flowers, the cool breeze that blows in our face and you will forever walk through my mind in silver sandals.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am grateful to the Almighty God for his provision. I never lacked in any way. He gave me the strength to go on when all that was human failed. I bow down before thy able throne to exalt and uplift thy Holy name. May all glory and honor come back to you.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Section one introduces the value of creative works and their role in creating awareness on issues afflicting society. It contains the statement of the problem, the objectives, hypotheses, justification, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, scope and limitations.

In section two I have the play. The Rubicon is a play that is written to highlight the plight of the boy – child in the face of indoctrination. The play addresses the process by which boys are lured to join organizations that pretend to offer them solace.

## Introduction

Creative writing helps creative writers to write to and for the society. Literature has purpose and social relevance which therefore gives the writer a duty to show the happenings in society. The creative writing I undertook helped me address the plight of the teenage boy-child in the face of indoctrination in modern-day Kenya. This is out of the realization that creative writing can give me the liberty to address major/serious issues afflicting the society for example indoctrination. At any given time we are likely to find more theatre goers than we have people going to the library to read for leisure. Literature has the moral obligation to show what is happening in society and therefore has the duty to correct it. It is through a play that a playwright is able to mimic society using characters. In a live performance one can hear the characters voices, the tones and even see and follow their actions. In a situation where one reads through a play these aspects are lost and only left to imagination. Watching a play can be compared to watching a football match. Watching a game is more enjoyable than reading about the game. J.L. Stayan in his book *The Elements of Drama* notes that ‘dramatic verse is more than dialogue verse.’ Dramatic dialogue is more than ordinary day conversation. According to J.L. Stayan a snatch of phrase caught in everyday conversation may mean little but when used by an actor on stage it can assume general and typical qualities. The context into which it is put can make it pull more than its conversational weight no matter how simple the words may be.

Over the last decade a lot of attention has been extended to the girl-child at the expense of the boy-child. Girls seem to elicit more sympathy than boys would in similar circumstances. Most of the affirmative action has been focused on the girl-child. For instance even the Joint Admissions Board at one time lowered the entry points for girls into higher institutions of learning. The boy-child is slowly occupying the dismal place the girl previously occupied. The girls are cushioned thus leaving the boy open to challenges. Most of the documentaries aired on our TVs are on girls. If there is anything aired on TV that involves boys, it is always negative. Most of them have joined organizations such as the Bagdad Boys, Chinkororo, Al-Shaabab, and the MRC among others. I would also like to interrogate the social construct which in so many ways has contributed to this problem. The family set-up has been disrupted. There are no role models as the father figure is missing in so many homes. They are busy making ends meet or are lacking

completely. The media has not made the situation any better. Exposure to the internet and the media has offered a recruitment ground.

The academic system has become purely academic and there is no room for moral guidance and counseling. Forces outside our learning institution are spilling over to our schools and taking a grip on teenage boys who are always eager to experiment. In Kenya today the number of boys in these organizations is enormous and thus there is need to address this issue before all our young men are turned into homicide machines. Therefore boys are finding an avenue to assert themselves as males in these organizations. Therefore there is need for focus shift from a girl centered affirmative action to a version that is more inclusive.

With this in mind I set out to write a play that helped me address a sensitive issue affecting our society today. The issue of indoctrination has become a thorn in the flesh in our schools and the society at large. News making headlines about the youth being recruited are aired almost every day in our newsrooms. Young boys have become the main target mostly in their adolescence which is a very delicate stage where they are eager to try new things. Parents and caregivers have failed in mentoring them. This helped me find a gap from which to develop my play. This creative work helped me create awareness and act as an eye-opener into the vice. Drama helped me to advance the plot and also to indicate the setting. It is through drama that I was able to develop characters that I used to develop and raise my thematic concerns. Drama allowed me to create conflict and suspense. According to an internet source [www.articlesbase.com](http://www.articlesbase.com) states that there is no drama without conflict. It further asserts that without conflict you have a dull read and therefore without conflict you have no drama. Conflict is therefore the very nature of drama. Conflict is therefore essentially the primary ingredient that binds all the other elements together. According to another source [www.musik-therapie.at/peder Hill/ conflict.htm](http://www.musik-therapie.at/peder_Hill/conflict.htm) conflict can be external or internal. The internal conflict is faced by an individual character and has an impact on that character and how he relates with others. The external conflict is manifested through the interaction between characters. This in turn will arouse emotions in the audience. Since drama has a moral obligation towards society my play will not just entertain it will also educate. Therefore reaching out to policy makers to take action and put measures in place to nib the vice in the bud.



## **Statement of the problem**

Over the years plays have been written on the Kenyan scene but few if any have been written particularly on the boy-child. No playwright has tackled the issue of the boy in the face of indoctrination. I therefore chose to tackle it by writing about it in the Kenyan dramatic context.

## **Objectives of the study**

- i. To use dramatic techniques to interrogate the effects of indoctrination.
- ii. To assess how conflict in a play raises thematic concerns.

## **Hypotheses**

- i. Dramatic techniques are effective in highlighting themes.
- ii. Conflict plays an important role in drama.

## **Justification of the study**

Dramatic technique helped me address indoctrination a vice that is affecting the teenage boy in present-day Kenya. It is a vice that has not been addressed in any published work. The dramatic techniques helped me enhance meaning and understanding into this issue to the audience. Speech directions guided me into knowing what the actors will say as they leave or enter the stage. Through the use of dialogue the characters pushed the plot forward as well as raised the thematic concerns. Cliff hangers which come slightly before action or after, for example darkening of the stage by switching lights off, some noise emanating from the background may prepare the audience for looming conflict. The use of dramatic irony will make the audience anticipate what is coming. With characterization I was in a position to create dramatic characters that could be round characters or flat characters depending on their given roles in the play. The dramatic structure helped in the play layout which includes setting and time, the introduction of conflict, the rising action and the climax leading to the end.

Very few playwrights if there are any who have written on indoctrination on the boy-child. I didn't come across any published work on this vice. I feel that there is a need to focus on the boy in the face of indoctrination. I found a fresh ground for a playwright to venture. It is through my play that I was able to interrogate the mindset of the youth in Kenya today.

## Literature Review

Aristotle in *Aristotle Poetics* argues that the elements of drama are plot, dialogue, music rhythm, and spectacle. In building my play I borrowed from the poetics. Aristotle points out that the plot is the first principle as it is the soul of tragedy. Though Aristotle concerns himself with tragedy I found his ideas useful in my work. He goes on to say this about the plot, “It is a series of events of a kind so arranged to arrest our attention.” Francis Fergusson in his book *The Idea of Theatre* writes in relation to Butcher’s translation of the fourth edition of his *Aristotle’s Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* states that “The plot is the imitation of the action –for by plot here I mean the arrangement of incidents”. The play is all about action both minor and major. Aristotle doesn’t offer the definition of action but offers a general definition of plot.

Francis Fergusson in his book, *The Idea of Theatre* records that action is an analogical concept which can only be understood with reference to particular action. He further asserts that the word refers to the action of which the play is an imitation to the mimetic acts of the dramatist-plot making, characterization and speech. The dramatist makes the play to the mimetic acts of the performers who reproduce it in the medium of their own being or characterized versions of the action the author had in mind. I therefore created action through characters who will be the proponents of my thematic concerns. I used dialogue which will be the words spoken by characters be they major or minor because they all work together to raise the thematic concerns and also enhance the plots cohesion. They served in the orchestration of the play as a whole. Though music is used in drama Aristotle was referring to musicality or tonal variation of the character’s voices. This variation helped me dramatize the different moods and situations.

J.L. Stayan in his book *The Elements of Drama* states that the way the characters speak differentiates them. He further states that the character must be sufficiently human for the actor to congruously present it in his own person and for the spectator to be in a position to recognize it. Stayan further asserts that words that possess any degree of feeling lose their force if spoken without intonation. Voice and movement are inseparable and a listener will be grateful for a good clarification through the voice of the actor. At the same time an actor is grateful for a line that tells him how to chant it (86). The use of spectacle which refers to the visual elements, sets, scenery and furniture helped me put my play in a specific setting.

Aristotle states that men enjoy imitating others, “Imitators imitate those who do something, those who do better than we are, or those who are such like ourselves”. I found this useful since drama is about imitations derived from people we interact with. Aristotle refers to imitation as the root of the fable.

I also found David Bergman and Daniel Mark’s ideas in *The Heath Guide to Literature* useful. David Bergman and Daniel Mark assert that the key elements are plot, characters, dialogue, setting, conflict and language. In writing the play David Bergman and Daniel Mark’s idea on setting where they assert that, setting is described in the opening stage directions helped me place the play in a given time and place. This enhances how real or how close to reality the play is. The setting is real since it alternates between a school setting and a home/societal setting. In the same strength I displayed my characters in a set physical surrounding and I also described the characters in terms of who they are and their relations to each other.

David Bergman and Daniel Mark refer to the plot as an ordered chain of physical, emotional or intellectual events that tie the action together. In writing my play I verbalized these actions through dialogue between the characters. Dialogue being the conversation between characters was fundamental in my writing. Dialogue helped me display my characters and in the same strength bring forth the concerns of my play. These events and interactions are bound to bring about conflict which is the basis of drama. All drama revolves around conflict. All elements of drama are weaved together by conflict. Conflict in my play rose from issues of indoctrination which is my main thematic concern.

K.T. Rowe in his book *Write that Play* asserts that there is no better impulse of writing a play than a feeling of knowing someone, a group of people or a kind of people in a special way. Ngugi wa Thiongo in his book *Writers in Politics* asserts that literature results from the conscious acts of men. He goes on to say that the very act of writing implies a social relationship. When one is writing he is writing about somebody for somebody. At the collective level literature as a product of men’s intellectual and imaginative activity embodies in words and images the tensions ,the conflicts, contradictions at the heart of a community’s being and process of becoming. Ngugi further asserts that all art aims at evoking and awakening in the observer, the listener or a reader emotions and impulses to action or opposition. He (Ngugi) further moves on

to say that the product of a writer's pen both reflects reality and also attempts to persuade us to take certain attitudes to that reality. I found this important in writing my play since I have interacted with boys at certain levels within and beyond school and I therefore was able to tell their story and thus evoking emotions that are bound to bring a reaction. Rowe also argues that wherever there is human life there is drama, that is, there is material for drama and it is the alert eye, ear, the insight of the organizing mind, the knowledge and practice of technique that makes drama of it. In this strength I engaged all the five senses to come up with quality creative work.

J. H. Lawson in his book *Theory and Technique of Playwriting* on the law of conflict asserts that drama deals with social relationships and therefore a dramatic conflict must reflect a social conflict. It is a conscious will directed at a specific goal. I wrote a play whose dramatic conflict will reflect a social conflict in the name of indoctrination. The struggle according to Henry Jones in Lawson's book says that a struggle that fails to reach a crisis is undramatic. He further asserts that a crisis is a point at which the balance of forces is so strained that something cracks forcing a realignment of forces and new patterns of relationship. Dramatic movement and action all lead to a change in equilibrium. Lawson says that the effectiveness of action does not depend on what people do, but on the meaning of what they do. Dramatic action helped me propagate the issues at hand since it combines physical movement and speech. In Lawson's book *Theory and Technique of Playwriting*, Archer states that a dramatic scene is a crisis building to an ultimate climax which is the core of the action (175). He further says that dramatic scenes are held together by sustained and increased tension. Dramatic architecture according to Archer is all about tension; to engender, maintain, suspend, and heighten a state of tension.

I also looked at some creative works written on the girl-child on the Kenyan scene. The play *Watchman* by Alliance Girls High School presented at the Kenya Drama festivals highlights the plight of the girl child being asked for sexual favors in exchange for services. This is a vice affecting our girls both in learning institutions and society at large. In *On Bended Knees* written by Shaban Mwero the focus is on the girl-child in Africa. It highlights the plight of the girl in the face of sexual assault, pleas for a good education and a cry to be heard. The same issues are expressed in *The Girl in Chains* recited by a Kenyan Girl (Phoebe Ruguru) based in the UK pleading for freedom from the shackles of early marriage. Considering what these works are

addressing I felt obliged to highlight the plight of the boy child. I did this by writing a play on the boy child in the face of indoctrination.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Susanna Onega and Angel Jose in the book *Narratology* assert that Narratology as a theory happens in most works of art films, plays and novels. They further assert that narration is a semiotic representation of events which are meaningfully related. Their argument also goes into the presentation of the fibula which leads us to the narrative structure. This is the structural framework that underlies the manner and order in which a story is presented to a viewer or a listener. The narrative structure of any work of art has plot, theme and resolution. I employed these ideas in laying out my play. In the initial stages I introduced the characters and the problem at hand which drove the story forward. Since drama is all about conflict I engaged the law of conflict using the characters. It is through their interaction that conflict arises leading to a need for change which is the resolution. All the elements of the story came together leading to the end of the play.

Narratology enlightened me in developing the plot and basically the flow right from the exposition, the rising action, the climax (point where the equilibrium is so shaken) thus leading to falling action and the resolution. Since drama is about cause and effect I was in a position to portray characters that are discontented by the existing state of affairs and then showed how they recognize the source of their discontent. This helped me create action as the characters interrelated.

In his book *Theory and Technique of Playwriting* Lawson states that the dramatic art theory follows certain rules resulting from the function of drama. It refers to the play as a mimed fable, an acted and spoken story. It is presented because it has meaning to its creator. For instance the play has an obligation to pose certain issues to and for society. However he states that it may not be a conscious move by the playwright because the audience is free to understand a work of art from any aspect. In relation to conflict he states that “since drama deals with social relationships a dramatic conflict must have a social conflict” (163). Following this I was able to write a play that depicts a dramatic conflict which in turn became a social conflict. He has laid out certain laws to be followed for instance the law of conflict, dramatic action and unity of action. The

unity of action helped me in combining the incidents which are the action of the play. The unity of action has the beginning, the middle and the end. The beginning refers to what is not posterior to another while with the middle something needs to have occurred before and after. This unity of action guided me in to the combination of incidents that constitute the plot of my play. Whereas, at the end nothing comes after. In relation to this I also engaged the unity of space so that I would have what can be realistically presented on stage. Such that I was in a position to create a play that can be acted in an ordinary theatre. Also in the same strength with the unity of time I was in a position to create a play that can be watched in its entirety in terms of length and which can be followed and remembered easily.

### **Methodology**

In writing my play I was guided by the ideas of Susanna Onega and Angel Jose in their book *Narratology* on the semiotic representation of events in relation to how they are meaningfully related to one another. The presentation of the fibula in connection to the structural framework led me in the layout of my play. Since drama is about conflict the law of conflict guided me in creating a dramatic conflict that has a social conflict. The layout from the exposition, to the rising action, the falling action, to the resolution helped me create the cause and effect required in drama.

I also used Lawson's concepts that drama should pose lessons for society to help me raise my thematic concerns since they have a social inclination. Lawson states that dramatic conflict must have a social conflict I was in a position to write a play that portrays this. The law on unity of action, unity of time and unity of space helped me in writing a play that will fit in a given time and space.

### **Scope and Limitation**

Though literature has several genres I zeroed down to a play. I felt more comfortable addressing my thematic concern using a play. Since I couldn't address more than one theme I chose to address indoctrination a vice that is affecting the Kenyan youth today.

The scope of this project was limited by time. The time framework couldn't allow for a longer play. Out of my research findings I found out that there was so much to write about but I limited

myself to only one theme because a play is strong if it addresses one theme. This project was limited to the youth in a Kenyan context. This play was limited to writing about the boy as their situation in the face of indoctrination is graver than that of the girls. The setting was limited to a school setting and its environs.

## **THE RUBICON**

### **Characters**

Mtawala	Principal of the Red Hill Academy
Elias	Deputy Principal
Chuma	Sergeant
Rafiq	Student
Taabu	Student
Edna	Teacher
Emma	Teacher
Teresa	Taabu's grandmother
Imara	Sergeant
Judas	Bishop Damascus Villa
Okech	Electrician
Old Man	
Lady X	
Johnie	
Nathan	
The students	
Everyone	
Principals	
Teachers	
Voice	TV. Anchor



## ACT 1

*(The setting is in the principal's office. At the centre of the room is the principal's desk with files piled on top. Facing the door on the right-side of the room is a leather sofa set. On the wall is a big painting with the school's emblem which is made up of a laptop with two trophies positioned on the sides. At the bottom of the emblem is the school's motto "Determination in Ambition". All is calm but there is an earth tremor that passes almost unnoticed but it is followed by another major one that leaves items strewn on the floor. Some noise can be heard from the classes and students are peeping through the windows. A T.V set positioned in one corner of the room loses its signals for a few seconds. The principal and teacher Elias enter the office. They look at the office in amazement.)*

**Mtawala:** Good Lord! Not an earthquake now, as if the blast hasn't cost this country enough damage. *(Their attention for now is on the news being aired on T.V and the items on the floor have to wait.)*

**Voice:** *(In the background.)*

News reaching our news desk informs us the country has just suffered an earthquake though no casualties have been reported. Some citizens have been seen scampering for safety because they are afraid following last week's blast. Our focus now shifts to last week's explosion at the Mavuno Supermarket. Here are some images from a video footage taken at the scene of the blast. News reaching us now indicates that the blast left ten people dead and destroyed the whole supermarket. There are unconfirmed reports that among the dead two have been identified as students from the Red Hill Academy.

**Mtawala:** *(Putting one palm to his mouth.)* No! Good Gracious! Just when we are planning to hold the national festivals in our school.

**Elias:** *(Putting one finger on his lip.)* We have a long way to go before the festival. Sshh!  
*(They both crane their necks as if to hear better what the anchor is saying.)*

**Voice:** *(In the background.)*

Sergeant Chuma who spoke to us earlier says the investigations are under way and so far some suspects have been apprehended in connection to the blast. We will continue to update you as the news trickle in. *(The principal walks away from the television set looking disappointed at the turn of events. Elias turns off the television, he doesn't look shaken and his lips are curved as if he wants to smile.)*

**Mtawala:** *(Moving around aimlessly.)* When is this madness going to end?

**Elias:** *(Looking away and picking the items still strewn on the floor and positioning them.)*

Disasters never come singly but I know the perpetrators will be apprehended.

**Mtawala:** *(Agitated.)* How shall I begin breaking the news of the dead students to their parents?

**Elias:** You may have to call them to school to break the news to them once it is confirmed sir.

**Mtawala:** *(Looking helpless.)* Do we even have an idea who these dead students are yet?

**Elias:** Yes, Mathew Sidi a form two student raised by a single lady and Cohen Mtwali an orphan both born and raised in the sprawling slum.

**Mtawala:** *(Startled.)* Really! Why you are so sure is there something that you know that I don't know?

**Elias:** *(Anxious.)* No, I would not keep such information from you those are just rumors doing rounds in the village.

*(The conversation is interrupted by the screeching of brakes outside at the parade ground and the principal peeps in time to see a police car slide in to an empty parking slot and before it completely stops an officer alights hurriedly and heads to the Principal's office. Elias seems relieved by the interruption. There's a knock on the door and before the principal answers the lights blink once and go off. Sergeant Chuma enters the office.)*

**Mtawala:** Come in sergeant, Elias would you please call the electrician?

**Elias:** Right away sir.

**Mtawala:** My apologies for the unwelcoming state we are in. Is everything okay? Why are you here this early? Take a seat please.

**Chuma:** *(Taking a seat.)* It is okay I understand.

*(The principal moves to the windows and draws the curtains further to let in more light. He moves back to the table and tries to arrange some papers strewn on the table.)*

**Mtawala:** Now tell me why you are here.

**Chuma:** Thank you sir, I know you are aware of the things going on around here.

**Mtawala:** Yes, it is very sad that as people we have transformed ourselves into a barbaric society, maybe that's why God is sending us earthquakes to warn us.

**Chuma:** You may put it that way but we have more serious things afflicting our society than the earthquake which is a natural occurrence.

**Mtawala:** I am confident you have apprehended the suspects in relation to the blast.

**Chuma:** It's much complicated than we thought. More young people are being recruited into the brotherhood.

**Mtawala:** (*Looking confused.*) What or who is the brotherhood?

**Chuma:** It is an organization made up mainly of young people and mostly young men.

**Mtawala:** (*Stands up and starts moving around.*) I hope by young you don't mean my students.

**Chuma:** (*Shaking his head.*) I am sorry but sadly they are involved.

**Mtawala:** I don't think so; I hope there is a mistake because my students wouldn't go to such extents.

**Chuma:** Welcome to the new face of terrorism. The perpetrators have mutated and our own sons and daughters are now our greatest threat.

**Mtawala:** And what evidence supports your allegations Chuma?

**Chuma:** We believe that the two students from your school who perished in the blast last Friday were among the suicide bombers who carried out this heinous act.

**Mtawala:** (*Looking uncertain.*) Sergeant those were innocent boys who perished.

**Chuma:** And that's what we thought too until we retrieved a video footage from the supermarket's CCTV camera.

**Mtawala:** (*Stunned.*) What?

**Chuma:** It showed the students still in their school attire positioning themselves strategically in the supermarket with the help of unidentified people. They detonated the bombs which they had worn and kaboom! They exploded to death.

**Mtawala:** Good Heavens! I can't believe this.

**Chuma:** (*Retrieving some photos from his jacket's pocket and handing them over to the principal.*) There, see it for yourself.

**Mtawala:** (*Loosening his tie.*) These two were just form two students, it is unbelievable. Cohen and Mathew were the most polite boys I ever saw.

(*The principal moves around agitated by the turn of events.*)

**Chuma:** And that's why we won't win this battle singlehandedly. We need your support and your cooperation.

(*The principal moves to the sofa set at the far end and heaves himself down. Beads of sweat are forming on his forehead. He seems lost in his own thoughts. Elias enters with Okech the electrician. Okech is carrying a ladder in one hand and a toolbox in the other.*)

**Okech:** Good morning!

**Mtawala:** Morning Okech please replace the bulb.

**Okech:** At your service sir. Please Elias switch off the lights.

**Elias:** Officer I hope you came to tell us that what we saw on TV was a mistake?

*(Chuma ignores the question and starts flipping through the newspaper. The bulb is replaced and Okech calls on Elias to switch the lights on.)*

**Mtawala:** That was fast.

**Okech:** The damage was minimal thus the system is still intact.

**Mtawala:** Thank you Okech.

**Okech:** Karibu sana mwalimu and sorry for the mishap.

*(Okech picks his tools of trade and exits.)*

**Mtawala:** *(Wiping his brow with a handkerchief.)* Please Elias get me a glass of water, switch on the fan and switch off the lights, I am feeling a little bit warm. *(Elias moves to the dispenser to get the water. The officer follows him with his eyes. He hands the water to the principal.)*

**Chuma:** *(Turning to the principal.)* Please get me the full names of the students in the pictures and I would need the names of any other students who were absent on the day the blast occurred.

**Mtawala:** *(Placing the empty glass on the table.)* Please Elias confirm with the teacher who was on duty last week which students were away on that day. *(Turning to Chuma.)* As for the two in the picture that's Mathew Sidi and Cohen Mtwali. Looking at them in this picture one would get the impression they were ready for any eventuality. Elias you are still here?

**Elias:** *(Stuttering.)* Give me a minute to check and confirm that sir.

**Chuma:** Come with the students if there are any we need to interrogate them.

**Elias:** *(Turning and looking surprised.)* Interrogation!

*(Chuma ignores the question and turns to the principal.)*

**Mtawala:** *(Looking anxious.)* Elias you are wasting precious time. Please go.

**Elias:** Okay I am sorry.

*(Teacher Elias exits.)*

**Chuma:** And who was that teacher? I don't like divulging information around people I have just met.

**Mtawala:** I don't get you.

**Chuma:** What position does he hold in school?

**Mtawala:** He is Elias; the deputy principal.

**Chuma:** How is he with information that requires confidentiality?

**Mtawala:** (*Surprised.*) Are you suggesting you suspect that he would disclose anything discussed here? You can't be serious; on this one you are wrong. He is the most hardworking teacher and the best disciplinarian in the whole school. To add on to that he is my right hand man and you have nothing to worry about. If there is anyone I trust with top secrets in this school it is Elias.

**Chuma:** (*Relieved.*) Remember I am a seasoned officer and I can't make assumptions. Anyway so much for that now, we need to conduct an impromptu inspection in the whole school and look for any leads that will give us clues on those responsible for the blast.

**Mtawala:** (*Hesitates.*) Are you suggesting that there might be more students involved?

**Chuma:** I am certain; many people are involved and there is more than meets the eye. I wouldn't be surprised if we found out that some of your teachers are involved. We can't take any chances.

**Mtawala:** When do you want to start the inspection?

**Chuma:** My team is on the way here. As soon as the team arrives we shall start the search. This search does not exempt your teachers. We will search all the classrooms, the staffroom and any other room in the school compound.

**Mtawala:** (*Taken aback.*) The staffroom!

**Chuma:** Yes, we will leave no stone unturned.

**Mtawala:** I propose we work with the teachers not against them. Remember, sergeant they have a union that protects them.

**Chuma:** We are working with them but that doesn't mean they are exempted from the whole process of investigation. Actually we have even notified the union and they have given us a go ahead. We are working within the law and if anything the whole process is about everyone's safety.

**Mtawala:** I expect some resistance though.

**Chuma:** And that's where you come in as the head of the institution. You will have to make them understand by all means necessary. Desperate times call for desperate measures.

**Mtawala:** *(Nodding.)* I will sergeant. Whatever you ask of me and I hope this nightmare will be over soon.

*(Elias enters followed by two shaken students Rafiq and Taabu.)*

**Elias:** Everyone else was in school except these two.

**Mtawala:** Rafiq where were you on Friday?

**Rafiq:** I had gone to the hospital because I was unwell.

**Mtawala:** *(Pauses as if studying his face.)* Did you have permission from the teacher on duty or you just walked away and went to the hospital?

**Rafiq:** I had permission from the teacher on duty.

**Mtawala:** At what time did you leave for the hospital?

**Rafiq:** At two p.m.

**Chuma:** Where else did you go apart from the hospital?

**Rafiq:** I just went straight to the hospital and by the time I finished it was after school hours and so I went straight home.

**Chuma:** Why did you go alone if you were really sick?

**Rafiq:** I preferred to go alone.

**Chuma:** *(Watching him closely.)* Since the hospital is in town where were you when the blast occurred?

**Rafiq:** *(Stammers.)* I was still in hospital and learnt about it later.

**Chuma:** Can you tell us anything you know about that blast?

**Rafiq:** I swear to you I know nothing.

**Chuma:** *(Raising his voice.)* Listen young man, I hope you are telling the truth because if you are not you will regret. Another thing, you will be charged with covering up for criminals or acting as an accomplice in a terror attack.

**Rafiq:** I am telling the truth. *(Sergeant Chuma turns his attention to Taabu who looks scared.)*

**Chuma:** What's your name?

**Taabu:** *(Answering with a shaky voice.)* Taabu.

**Chuma:** Where were you on Friday?

**Taabu:** *(Some beads of sweat are forming on his brow and he struggles to get his handkerchief from his pocket.)* I had been sent home for school fees that morning.

**Chuma:** Is that so teacher Elias?

**Elias:** *(Caught off guard by the question, he struggles to get the answer.)* Yes, he is the only one who had not paid school fees.

**Chuma:** *(Sarcastically.)* Son I was once a student and sometimes I would deliberately refuse to pay school fees so that I could be sent away from school.

**Taabu:** That's not the case sir, I am an orphan and I live with my poor grandmother who struggles to raise my school fees.

**Chuma:** *(Ruthlessly.)* Don't try the emotion thing on me. Your being an orphan does not make you blameless of any criminal activity. It is most likely you know something about the blast.

**Taabu:** *(Fighting back tears.)* No sir!

**Chuma:** Where do you live?

**Taabu:** In the slums just outside the town.

**Chuma:** Do you know Cohen and Mathew?

**Taabu:** We grew up in the slums and we've been going to the same schools from nursery school up to high school.

**Chuma:** *(Studying him closely.)* Did you meet them on Friday?

**Taabu:** I only saw Mathew in the morning on my way to school, but for Cohen I had met him the previous day.

**Chuma:** What did you talk about?

**Taabu:** Nothing.

**Chuma:** *(Turning to the principal.)* Sorry for taking so much time but we can't rush these things. My team will be here anytime now they just beeped me to let me know they are within the compound. These boys can go for now.

**Mtawala:** That's okay, Teacher Elias ring the bell immediately. Tell all teachers and students to gather at the assembly ground.

*(Everyone gathers at the assembly ground. Murmurs and whispers are going round as everyone tries to figure out what is happening. Mtawala stands on the platform and everyone falls silent.)*

**Mtawala:** Good morning once again. I know you are wondering why we have an assembly for the second time today. As you all know there was a bombing at Mavuno Supermarket.

**Students:** *(In unison.)* Yes!

**Mtawala:** Sergeant Chuma who is our guest today is here to conduct an inspection in our school.

*(Murmurs can be heard.)* Silence please. I would like this exercise to take the shortest time possible so that the school programme can run. Everyone of you is expected to keep off the classrooms. You all sit here and wait to be instructed on the next move.

*(The principal walks away.)*

*(In the staffroom teachers are conversing in low tones as Elias enters.)*

**Elias:** Guess what!

**Edna:** Spill the beans we are not very good at guessing. The anxiety is already killing us.

**Elias:** There is an inspection that is going to take place here and no one is exempted.

**Teachers:** What!

**Elias:** You heard me colleagues and who is carrying it out if not the police.

**Edna:** Where do we as teachers come in to this?

**Elias:** Apparently we are all suspects following last week's blast.

**Edna:** I don't get you.

**Elias:** Our students were involved so by default we stand accused.

**Edna:** *(Surprised.)* Really! They are not serious. Just tell us it is a nasty joke.

**Elias:** Unfortunately it isn't. Don't be surprised if they turn up at your house later.

**Edna:** That's taking a joke too far. I hope this is one of the pranks you like pulling on us.

**Elias:** *(Enjoying the moment.)* I actually encouraged the search and if it carries the day I will lead the team to search your houses. I would actually want to start at your house because you are creating such a hullabaloo that anyone would suspect you.

**Edna:** *(Pointing an accusing finger at him.)* Don't you dare! Anyone else can come to my house but not you. Get that through your smart head.

**Elias:** Okay! Okay! The house search bit is a joke but don't rule the possibility out.

**Edna:** Why didn't the principal stop this?

**Elias:** His hands are tied and he has no choice than to allow this exercise to take place.



**Edna:** *(Suddenly she goes quiet, looking unsure of what to say. Regains composure and breaks the silence that is already too loud.)* We can't allow this investigation to go on. This whole exercise is interfering with the privacy of everyone in this school.

**Teachers:** *(In unison.)* Yes!

**Edna:** They can't treat us the same way they treat the students.

**Elias:** Even students have a right to their space.

**Edna:** How can the union allow them to investigate us without notifying us beforehand? Emma you are so quiet. *(She hadn't noticed Emma leave the office. She notices Emma is not around.)* Let's wait and hear what Emma has to say about this when she comes back. I would have expected the union to come to us as they always do when they need our votes. I am feeling so bad.

**Elias:** *(Looking unperturbed.)* You shouldn't be this mad for this is just a minor operation that will not take long.

**Edna:** *(Sarcastically.)* What if it does?

**Elias:** *(Amused by her reaction.)* If you have nothing to hide you have nothing to fear my dear.

**Sergeant Chuma:** *(Approaches cautiously as if eavesdropping.)* How are you teachers? I am sorry for inconveniences caused but the law has to take its course.

**Emmah:** *(Comes back.)* Sorry officer for the initial reaction I forgot to inform the teachers in good time. Please bear with me.

**Elias:** It is okay because we all understand how delicate the situation is. We should all take this in good faith because it is for our own safety.

**Chuma:** If anything none of us can obstruct the arm of law from enforcing its mandate. If you would please allow us we need to search the staffroom.

*(They grudgingly walk towards their lockers. One by one they open their lockers, fold their arms and wait. The silence from the teachers is loud. The only noise disturbing the uncanny peace is the locking and opening of lockers by the officers.)*

**Chuma:** *(Moves around taking notes and trying hard to be calm. After they are done with the exercise, he turns towards the teachers.)* The exercise is over now you can enjoy your space.

*(No teacher moves until all the officers are out of the room.)*

**Elias:** Thank you Chuma rest assured that the teachers of this school are blameless when it comes to any criminal activity.

**Chuma:** I am just doing my duty and the law has no room for ignorance. (*Chuma exits.*)

**Edna:** This was just a waste of time. Elias you were for this exercise so now tell me what did they find?

**Elias:** They might not have found anything but we are comfortable none of us is involved. Just imagine if they had found anything incriminating? It would have been such a big deal.

**Edna:** Do you know that police officers in this country can plant evidence on you and you would have no proof of your innocence? Which means you can go in for a long time and you are innocent. You don't know what could have happened if we weren't hanging around.

**Elias:** That's a fallacy which holds no water. Kindly show me someone who is locked up and didn't at one time have a criminal record.

**Edna:** Do you know they can come here expecting us to bribe them?

**Elias:** (*Amused.*) You never stop to amaze me. Could you by any chance have been a policeman before you became a teacher?

**Edna:** (*Irritated.*) You know very well I am talking the truth.

**Elias:** (*Smiling.*) I wish this officers would come here more frequently you are falling for me.

**Edna:** (*Annoyed.*) What part of you and I can't be together don't you get?

**Elias:** (*Sitting on top of her table.*) Maybe one day I will be everything you need but for now it is not about us.

**Edna:** (*Raising her voice.*) Get off my table! I need to write my notes. I hate lazing around the way you do.

**Elias:** Please Edna you don't have to be so uptight. Today is a Friday and I feel good that something is going on around here and we don't have to teach. Start preparing yourself for the weekend. You worry yourself too much over things that don't exactly concern you. Life is not permanent.

**Edna:** My concern here is my students and when I am not doing what am supposed to do it breaks my heart. You should know that these interruptions don't stop the exam from coming. We must hit the deadlines and prepare the students well. What exactly is the officer's main concern in this school? Why our school and not any other school? Our school is one of the best around here and what exactly are we being investigated for?

**Elias:** Yes it is but it is turning out to be best in other things.

**Edna:** What do you mean?

**Elias:** The death of the two students has been confirmed and what's more they were involved in the blast. I feel sorry for them. Why would anyone involve students in such dreadful acts?

**Edna:** What! Who confirmed that?

**Elias:** (*Leaning closer and lowering his voice.*) Chuma did. Incidentally I don't believe him. Those students were just victims of the blast like everybody else. I don't know why anybody in their right mind would want to even insinuate that those boys were among the masterminds. Such high-tech intelligence can only come from veteran criminals.

**Edna:** That doesn't answer the question why the officers are here today. If the boys are dead what else do they need from us?

**Elias:** They believe the boys were not working alone. They are suspecting that some teachers were involved and most likely some more students are involved. This whole exercise will turn out to be a sham for instance they have searched this office and what did they find? For me it was a blessing I have never imagined sitting this close to you and not being pushed away.

**Edna:** Cut that out! What happened here means nothing to me it was an ordinary sitting arrangement which could happen with anybody else. Please get off my table.

**Elias:** Kuwa mpole! If men are such a bother you should have joined a convent.

**Edna:** Do you know why I can't stand you because you pester me. You jump from a serious conversation to some trivial things. Back to what we were talking about does the principal believe them?

**Elias:** Liking you for me is serious business. As for the principal he was surprised just like you and I. I thought this exercise would be over by now but you can't believe this, the officers have just finished checking the students and remember they have not checked the classrooms and any other area they deem fit checking.

**Edna:** The students must be feeling harassed and I pity them. Just look at those sniffer dogs they are enough scare for them.

**Elias:** I hope none of them is a victim. I can't afford to lose more students. I already feel so bad that they are missing lessons. Nobody would understand if I said that I love them as if

they were my own flesh and blood. As a matter of fact I almost shed tears over the late students. In the few years that I have taught this is the saddest day of my life.

*(The principal enters the staffroom.)*

**Mtawala:** Please Elias make arrangement for a common lunch since we are already late for lunch and no one is allowed to leave the compound before the investigations are over. Here is some money and remember to include the officers and if it is not enough let me know. Edna can help you with this because she is the welfare manager.

**Elias:** *(Looking excited and winking at Edna.)* Thank you sir! *(Mtawala leaves.)* I will call for deliveries while you make arrangements for the utensils and the cutlery.

**Edna:** Good riddance now you can get off my desk.

**Elias:** Everyone sees this thing between us except you. I hope one day you will realize it. Don't take too long am growing old.

*(The exercise is still on but almost coming to an end. It is a tiring experience. Any suspicious material is handed to Chuma.)*

**Chuma:** *(One officer hands some papers to Chuma. He looks at them makes some notes and hands it to one of the officers.)* Take this and put it in a sealed envelope. *(The rest are not given a chance to see the contents. After they are done with the exercise they head to the principal's office. Knocks on the door.)*

**Mtawala:** *(He looks up and sees the officers and anxiously ushers them in.)* Come in and feel at home. Did you find anything incriminating?

**Chuma:** Yes, though we can't go into details at this point, but would you please get me the following students, Taabu and Rafiq. I would like to take them to the station for further interrogation.

**Mtawala:** *(Confused.)* My students!

**Chuma:** Yes sir. It is interesting to note that these names coincide with the names of the boys we interrogated this morning.

**Mtawala:** *(Pressing the intercom button he buzzes the secretary who walks in almost immediately.)* Kindly call Taabu and Rafiq.

**Chuma:** *(Moving around.)* The puzzle has just begun and I hope it ends soon.

**Secretary:** *(Tensed up.)* Excuse me sir, they are not in school today.

**Mtawala:** *(Raising his voice.)* That can't be, they were here this morning. Can you please call Elias. *(The secretary walks out.)*

**Chuma:** Those boys are not innocent as they looked this morning. Looks are deceiving they almost fooled me. Rafiq is the one I need most but since Taabu is the desk mate I need him too.

**Mtawala:** *(Still in shock.)* I would have sworn you were wrong about my students.

**Chuma:** *(Smiling sardonically.)* People can feign innocence and get away with it but not under my watch. I am a veteran officer who can sense mischief from far.

*(There is a knock and Elias enters.)*

**Elias:** You asked for me sir. Your lunch is ready.

**Mtawala:** *(Ignoring the lunch bit since there are more pressing things at hand.)* Would you please check whether it is true that Taabu and Rafiq are not in the school now?

**Elias:** *(Looking nervous.)* I have just come from their class and they are not there. I needed some students from that class. As a matter of fact I was going to tell you about it when you asked. One of the students reported to me earlier that he saw the two squeezing themselves through a hole in fence. They call it the "panya route". They might have become scared of the police presence.

**Chuma:** *(Sneering.)* Why the two of them? There is more than meets the eye.

**Mtawala:** It is okay Elias, you can leave. Ask Edna to bring our lunch *(Turning to Chuma.)* We are having late lunch and we would want you to join us.

**Chuma:** *(Already standing.)* Sorry sir but we can't wait we have other assignments to attend to before the end of the day and time is not on our side. We should be on our way now. I will keep you posted. In the meantime, I will follow up on these students who have escaped but keep it between us. I wouldn't want them to get scared and run away. We need them now more than ever.

**Mtawala:** Thank you. Should anything come up, I will let you know. Take this money you can buy the officers lunch out there.

**Chuma:** Thank you. *(Chuma exits with the other officers.)*

**Mtawala:** *(Talking to no one in particular.)* I hope this nightmare ends soon because the exams are around the corner and we can't afford to lose time. *(Buzzes the secretary.)* Go to teacher Edna and tell her not to bring lunch the officers have left and I am not hungry.

*(The setting is in Taabu's home. It's a small mud house filled with second rated furniture which is disarranged. An old woman in her sixties is sitting on a trashy sofa. She is singing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" in a drunken stupor. There is an empty bottle of cheap liquor on the floor and a packet of cigarettes is on the table. Taabu enters interrupting the singing.)*

**Teresa:** Young boy, what are you doing in the house when you should be in school?

**Taabu:** They have suspended me again grandma.

**Teresa:** Arrrg! What's wrong with you boy?

**Taabu:** I am sorry grandma.

**Teresa:** Sorry my foot! What have you done this time? Steal?

**Taabu:** *(Pleading.)* I didn't steal anything. The other students falsely accused me of colluding with criminals.

**Teresa:** *(Shouting.)* I asked you, what did you steal?

*(Taking a broom.)*

**Taabu:** *(Afraid.)* I didn't steal anything grandma! You have to believe me.

**Teresa:** It is money isn't it? How much was it?

**Taabu:** I said I never stole anything!

**Teresa:** You ungrateful boy. I thought we talked about your discipline issues.

*(Grabs him and attempts to beat him shouting obscenities and fails to beat him because she is drunk.)*

**Taabu:** Please grandma. I never stole! Would you please listen?

**Teresa:** Shut up! I will not live with a thief in my house. You are just as hopeless as your father before he was lynched by a mob.

**Taabu:** Don't drag my poor father into this. You condemned him in life and even now that he is dead insults follow him to his grave. Can't he find rest even in death?

**Teresa:** Get your clothes and leave; I have had enough of you! Or I will kill you with my own hands.

**Taabu:** *(Gets on his knees and bringing both palms together against his chest pleading for mercy but these pleas fall on deaf ears.)* But I have nowhere to go grandma. You are my only family. Don't chase me away.

**Teresa:** You have chased yourself you thief. Get out! *(She tries to reach out to him.)* You are good for nothing boy.

**Taabu:** No! Grandma. What have I done?

**Teresa:** I am tired of you. My patience is running out as if struggling to raise you is not enough trouble.

**Taabu:** Why do you hate me that much grandma? I'm not my father so stop treating me like him because am not him.

**Teresa:** (*Sneering.*) An apple doesn't fall far from the tree. I am going out to get a matchbox and I don't want to see you when I get back. (*Grandma exits and leaves Taabu crying with his face buried in his hands.*)

**Rafiq:** (*Comes rushing into the room and shouts.*) Taabu! I saw your grandma leave and I rushed in. You look haggard what happened?

**Taabu:** (*Wiping tears from his face.*) You startled me. What are you up to now? Aren't you scared that we ran away from school? Leave me alone. Grandma has just sent me packing. How am I supposed to take that positively? Where was I supposed to go?

**Rafiq:** Relax men things are not that bad.

**Taabu:** Look here grandma is not amused that I am here (*sobs.*)

**Rafiq:** Why?

**Taabu:** I came in expecting to find her away but guess what, I find her here in the worst state. Drunk!

**Rafiq:** Go on before she comes I know she can be very unreasonable in that state and I don't want her to extend her wrath on me.

**Taabu:** When she saw me she got really mad and started accusing me of stealing like always.

**Rafiq:** What! Why didn't you defend yourself?

**Taabu:** What makes you think I didn't? I tried but my pleas fell on deaf ears trust you me. Any mistake I make triggers very bad memories in her. You should have heard her ranting on and on about my late father.

**Rafiq:** (*Looking sympathetic.*) Really!

**Taabu:** Everytime we have an argument it goes back to my father. Do you know how painful it is to be judged by someone else's character? She has never seen me as myself. To her I am a photocopy of my father. (*Tries to smile.*)

**Rafiq:** I can only imagine and I guess it is not amusing.

**Taabu:** There was so much hatred in that old face. I also think she pulls out her wasted dreams and her misery and pours it on me anytime we have an argument. She doesn't miss the opportunity if it creates itself. I have become an avenue for her to echo her frustrations.

**Rafiq:** Nothing lasts forever in life. There is always a way out if only we open our eyes and see the doors that are opening and not the ones that are closing. This thing with grandma could turn out to be a blessing you never know. Cheer up brother!

**Taabu:** Cheer up? Don't be ridiculous. For me doors are always closing I don't remember seeing any doors opening.

**Rafiq:** Doesn't everything in life have a beginning and an end? Actually the Holy Bible says there is a time for everything.

**Taabu:** It is easy to say that. Maybe it applies to others but for me the future seems bleak.

**Rafiq:** (*Looking confident.*) Have faith we will find a way around this.

**Taabu:** (*Looking lost.*) My life sucks! No one loves me. You know nothing about my problems. You don't understand my plight. My whole life has been basically agonizing. I don't know how it feels to be loved. My mother left me when I was just in class three. My father was lynched when I was in class six. I have survived and lived on bitterness. There is no one whom I can trust and no one to share my past with. It haunts me everyday. Sometimes I wish I was not born. What good can come out of me? I am as good as dead. (*He starts to sob.*) I shouldn't have listened to you.

**Rafiq:** Don't yield to such thoughts. You hold your life in your hands and tomorrow must find you alive if you want to eat the fruits of your struggles. Choose wisely and one day you will be grateful you met me. You are not the only one with problems Taabu. You must learn to take everything positively.

**Taabu:** My grandma has just told me that she doesn't want to see me in the house when she comes back. What is positive about that? If only my mother was alive. (*Closing his eyes as if relieving some memories that sadden him for a while.*)

**Rafiq:** She may not be alive but that's why I am here. I am your brother and I will never leave you.

**Taabu:** (*Surprised.*) And what do you intend to do?

**Rafiq:** If your grandma won't listen I will find a place for you. I can as well host you Taabu. Maybe you are better off away from here.



*(There is a big bang on the door. Sergeant Chuma enters followed by some policemen. Rafiq and Taabu stop talking and move to one side of the room taken by surprise. The police immediately apprehend Rafiq and Taabu looks a bit relieved.)*

**Chuma:** Rafiq you are hereby under arrest for the possession of suspicious materials which we believe were used in the bombing of Mavuno Supermarket.

**Police Officer:** *(Looking startled.)* Sergeant Chuma, are you sure you have the right person?

**Chuma:** Yes, he is the boy we are looking for. This innocent looking hoodlum had in his desk some pictures of Mavuno Supermarket and maps we believe aided in the bombing.

**Rafiq:** That is not proof enough sir. I found them on my way to school and I didn't know the implication of having them with me. I just thought they were ordinary papers that I could use to cover my books.

**Chuma:** *(Slapping him across the face.)* Oh no! Whom do you think you are fooling around with young man? You had better shut up because if you don't I will help you. I will make you sing like a canary. Then why did you run away from school? *(Addressing the officers.)* Take him away.

**Rafiq:** *(Attempts to resist arrest.)* I am not going anywhere sir until I see your warrant of arrest.

**Chuma:** *(Irritated.)* Listen young man, five people perished in that blast. I don't need a warrant to arrest you. Stop being hardheaded or I will crack you like a nut. *(Taabu is looking on too dazed to speak.)* Search the house!

*(A Police officer keeps vigil at the door while the rest search the house.)*

**Taabu:** *(Recovers from the shock and shouts.)* You can't do that this is my grandma's house.

**Chuma:** Let us do our work young man. *(Addressing the officers.)* Turn the house upside down. *(Curious onlookers are hanging around speaking in low tones when they see Teresa hurrying to her house unsure of what is going on. They point accusing fingers at her. She is surprised on finding police officers in her house and she shouts out.)*

**Teresa:** What are you people doing here?

**Chuma:** My name is Sergeant Chuma and we are here to arrest Rafiq. I assume that you are the owner of the house. Who is Rafiq to you?

**Teresa:** *(She is relieved on seeing that Taabu is okay.)* I'm Taabu's grandmother. Rafiq is just a neighbor. Is there someone in my bedroom?

**Chuma:** Yes, we are searching the house.

*(The policeman comes from the bedroom.)*

**Policeman:** There is nothing sir.

**Teresa:** *(Losing her patience and struggling to stand.)*

Now get out of my house before I start screaming my head off. I may be a poor old woman but that does not justify the way you are treating me. *(Shouting obscenities.)*

**Chuma:** Let's go boys. We shall be back soon just in case we need the other one. Get him going. *(Handcuff him.)*

**Rafiq:** *(Lifts his hands in the air.)* Hooray!

**Chuma:** Move or I will knock daylight out of you.

**Teresa:** *(Angrily.)* I thought I told you that I don't want to find you when I come. Which part of that didn't you understand?

**Taabu:** I'm leaving and never coming back and I hope you will never regret this.

**Teresa:** *(Clapping her hands.)* Go! Go! Go! And never look back. *(Taabu walks out and he aimlessly walks on the road. He sees teacher Elias approaching and almost dashes off but Elias calls out.)*

**Elias:** *(Shouting.)* Taabu, stop! I need to talk to you. *(Taabu stops and waits as the teacher approaches. On reaching where Taabu is, he asks.)* Is it true that they have taken Rafiq?

**Taabu:** Yes teacher.

**Elias:** *(Looking curious.)* Why? Did they say anything?

**Taabu:** The officer who came to school this morning talked about some maps found in his desk.

**Elias:** *(Looking sympathetic.)* Poor boy, I hope nothing happens to him and where are you going?

**Taabu:** I have been chased away from home by my grandmother following what happened today at school.

**Elias:** Oh! I am so sorry, but you can go over to my house for a short stay. Make sure that nobody sees you as you enter my compound. I will come later. Tell the houseboy that I sent you.

**Taabu:** *(Excited.)* Thank you so much.

**Elias:** But on one condition.

**Taabu:** Whatever you ask Sir.

**Elias:** Promise that you won't misbehave.

**Taabu:** (*Putting the index finger on his lips and then lifting it to the sky.*) I swear!

(*Later in the evening.*)

**Elias:** (*Advising Taabu.*) I think Taabu it is a high time you took your studies seriously. If you want to one day get out of the slums education is the key.

**Taabu:** Yes teacher.

**Elias:** It pains me to see young boys like you messing around. Remember your future is in your hands. One time in a lecture hall at the university a student had a butterfly in his hand. He asked the professor whether the butterfly was alive or dead. The professor thought about it and said if I say it is alive you will crash the butterfly and if I say it is dead you will open your palm and let it go. You know why, because the life of that butterfly is in your hands. That the same thing with you Taabu your future is in your hands you can crash it or mould it and give it wings.

**Taabu:** (*Nodding in agreement.*) Yes teacher.

**Elias:** There are so many opportunities of doing it but few people dare to try. Taabu you are not the type that is afraid to try. There is a Nigerian proverb that says “You can tell a cock on the day it hatches.” I saw that daring spirit when I first met you.

**Taabu:** (*Smiling and feeling good.*) For the first time someone believes in me.

**Elias:** (*Enjoying the moment.*) I have always admired you but I never thought I would ever have such an opportunity to talk you one on one. Don't shy away from opportunities that will come your way. They could be the key to your future.

**Taabu:** But I would want to go back to school.

**Elias:** Your chances could be slim considering you ran away from school.

**Taabu:** Teacher you can plead with the principal for me.

**Elias:** I will do my best but if he doesn't don't shy away from trying other things education is not everything.

**Taabu:** (*Surprised.*) Really!

**Elias:** Let's be realistic and just look around how many people are successful and they never went to school. Just come to think of it does it mean if you don't go to school you will stop living? No you must find your footing and move on.

**Taabu:** (*Nodding in agreement.*) I agree with you.

**Elias:** You can go to bed now; you have an assignment for tomorrow morning. Goodnight.

*(The setting is in a police station reception. At the right side of the room are cells where we see some inmates inside. Rafiq is held in a separate room because he is a minor. Taabu is waiting at the reception in order to see Rafiq. At the left side is an interrogation room and an exit. Taabu is waiting anxiously for Rafiq to be brought in. He has a paper bag in his hands which a policeman checks and finds a thermos flask containing tea and he also has a loaf of bread. This is meant for Rafiq's breakfast. The officer doesn't notice that Taabu has a clenched fist which he is trying to put in the pocket. A policeman brings in Rafiq who is in handcuffs. He unlocks the handcuffs and moves a little further to allow Rafiq and Taabu to talk.)*

**Taabu:** *(He reaches out as if to shake hands with Rafiq and his clenched fist opens in Rafiq's hand.)* How are you? What have they done to you?

**Rafiq:** *(He shakes Taabu's hand and grasps the note and quickly puts his hand under the table. He turns cautiously to check whether the policeman is watching. He turns and reads the note in his hands quickly and brings it to his mouth and chews it to avoid being caught with the note. Taabu looks on perplexed and wonders how Rafiq understands the coded message in the note which seemed foreign to Taabu since he had tried reading it on the way to the police station. Rafiq tries hard to act as normally as he can. He continues with the conversation.)*

It's okay just some small bruises. Compared to what people go through in police custody this is small.

**Taabu:** That's wrong; you shouldn't be here in the first place.

**Rafiq:** It is okay Taabu I will be fine. Don't worry about me.

**Taabu:** What's all this about you being involved in the blast?

**Rafiq:** It's a long story.

**Taabu:** How could they even accuse you of being involved?

**Rafiq:** People can frame others. I will be out of here soon. I want you to promise me something.

**Taabu:** Anything Rafiq.

**Rafiq:** *(Whispering.)* I want you to go and meet someone when you get out of here and tell him that I am alright.

**Taabu:** And who is that? Remember I am already in trouble with grandma because of you.

**Rafiq:** Just a very good friend of mine. He knows about you case with grandma and he shall be waiting for you.

**Taabu:** I don't get it. Does he know you are here?

**Rafiq:** By now I know he knows.

**Taabu:** And exactly who is he to you besides being a good friend as you put it?

**Rafiq:** Just a very good friend. Taabu do you trust me?

**Taabu:** I do Rafiq, you are my only friend and you come second after my girlfriend Bellamy.

**Rafiq:** (*Amused.*) Hehehe...you should tell Bellamy how you feel about her.

**Taabu:** (*Embarrassed.*) My chances are low Rafiq, I always fear her response.

**Rafiq:** (*Smiling.*) One day she will come begging you. Fear begets cowards. You shouldn't be afraid in this life.

**Taabu:** I will try Rafiq.

**Rafiq:** (*Turning around to check that no one is listening.*) Our time is almost up. I am actually enjoying the privilege because of a good friend of mine who works here. Anyway, when you get out of here go straight to the old garage opposite The Freedom Statue and ask for a man called the Switch. Tell him am okay and do pay attention to what he tells you.

**Taabu:** I will, but we need to get you out of here.

**Rafiq:** Don't stress yourself about this. He will do everything in his power to get me out of here and also tell him about yourself. I don't want to see you suffer when there are people who can help you with your situation.

**Taabu:** What situation?

**Rafiq:** (*Mockingly.*) That you are homeless as we speak. He will help you. He is a wealthy man with a very good heart.

**Taabu:** I don't need anyone's help. It's crazy but I still believe that my mother will come back. I always have a feeling that she is always around watching but in the meantime I will hustle and bustle.

**Rafiq:** That's a dream Taabu. Wake up man! How will you survive without education, skills and mind you, you are a minor according to the law. No one will employ you. You need someone, someone to protect you, someone to give you a shelter. Just promise me you will meet him.

**Taabu:** That's asking a lot from me Rafiq.

**Rafiq:** That's the least that you can do for me and for yourself.

**Taabu:** Alright I will try.

*(Policeman enters.)*

**Policeman:** Your time is up.

**Rafiq:** He just came in.

**Policeman:** Shut up! I am just extending the favor out of respect for someone else.

**Taabu:** It's okay, I will see you again tomorrow Rafiq.

**Rafiq:** Thanks Taabu. Say hi to Bellamy.

**Taabu:** I will. *(Taabu exits and Rafiq is taken away.)*

*(In Sergeant Chuma's office there is a meeting supposed to take place between the officer and the principal. The sergeant enters followed by the principal.)*

**Chuma:** Well bwana Mtawala thank you for availing yourself in spite of your busy schedule.

Your help will go a long way to help us find these perpetrators who are using the students for their own selfish needs.

**Mtawala:** I am just doing my duty. I am still in shock on finding out that my students could go to such extents.

**Chuma:** At least now you know. It's time to formulate new strategies to ensure that your students don't end up as terrorists.

**Mtawala:** I won't allow it, not under my watch.

**Chuma:** Before you leave. I understand that next year your school will be hosting the National Drama Festivals?

**Mtawala:** *(Looking curious.)* Yes! And why do you ask?

**Chuma:** Why was your school chosen to host the festival?

**Mtawala:** *(Proudly.)* Because we have the largest hall in the province.

**Chuma:** How many people does it hold?

**Mtawala:** Five thousand per sitting.

**Chuma:** I have my own reservations. We'll need to tighten up security before then. And if such bombings don't stop you might be forced to forfeit it.

**Mtawala:** We have been waiting for this festival for a whole year. Preparations are way ahead. We can't forfeit this opportunity; our school will lose out on a chance of a lifetime.

**Chuma:** Am just saying, lets pray to God that security will have been tightened otherwise I will have no choice than to call the festivals off.

**Mtawala:** There is no otherwise sergeant; I can't allow these security incidents to sabotage our plans. That's your responsibility. The festival will go on as planned otherwise how do I explain the withdrawal.

**Chuma:** I thought you would rethink that issue. A lot is at stake and you may end up losing lives in a bid to furnish the chance of a lifetime which may never come to pass.

**Mtawala:** And that's why you are here. You will help with security right?

**Chuma:** I will but...

**Mtawala:** (*Looking contented.*) That's enough for the festival to proceed. I will let you in, on any new developments.

**Chuma:** The reason I am saying so is because I am afraid that some of your teachers may also be involved.

**Mtawala:** (*Surprised.*) My teachers!

**Chuma:** Yes, we believe Matthew Sidi and Cohen Mtwali were recruited in to the brotherhood through your teachers.

**Mtawala:** How?

**Chuma:** Someone must have identified them and lured them into joining the organization. That can only be done by someone who knew them very well.

**Mtawala:** And why would one agree to such a thing?

**Chuma:** Because they get a lot of money. With our failing economy, one wouldn't mind selling his country so as to get food on the table.

**Mtawala:** I have a bad feeling. I am now scared that this nightmare is not ending anytime soon.

**Chuma:** You should be. Just be alert and report any teacher who behaves suspiciously.

**Mtawala:** I will sergeant. I will now leave you to continue with your duties.

**Chuma:** Alright, thank you again for your time. (*Mtawala leaves. Chuma calls out and the Corporal enters.*)

**Imara:** Yes Sir.

**Chuma:** Prepare the interrogation room and bring in Rafiq.

**Imara:** Yes sir.

**Chuma:** Oh! Don't forget the razor blades.

**Imara:** But sir...he is too young for that kind of torture.

**Chuma:** (*Almost shouting.*) I know it's against the rules. But if we don't get any information more lives will be at stake. Haven't I tried talking to him and he is adamant.

**Imara:** (*Shrugging.*) I will not get involved in this sir.

**Chuma:** (*Irritated.*) Fine officer Imara. I will relieve you of your duties and we can get an officer who is more competent, there are so many other duty stations you can report to. Once you join the forces half the times you will have to agree with what is done to suspects albeit it being inhumane.

**Imara:** But sir!

**Chuma:** (*Raising his voice.*) No but. Get me the blades or get out of my sight but remember nobody walks out on Chuma and gets away with it. No more discussions do as I said.

**Imara:** I will get it sir.

(*As Imara leaves, Rafiq is brought into the interrogation room where Sergeant Chuma is waiting eagerly.*)

**Rafiq:** (*Confused.*) Why am I here?

**Chuma:** (*Trying hard to be calm.*) You tell me young boy. What was that map and those pictures of Mavuno Supermarket doing in your desk?

**Rafiq:** (*Confident.*) I am not going to say a word until I get a lawyer.

**Chuma:** (*Rather annoyed.*) You can't come to this station to make demands. You will get represented once you start talking. Mind you this talking should be sensible enough to satisfy me.

**Rafiq:** (*Stubbornly.*) Well I am not talking.

**Chuma:** (*Impatiently.*) Do you know how many people died? Five including your two friends Matthew Sidi and Cohen Mtwali.

**Rafiq:** (*Arrogantly.*) As for the number I am not aware how many died because you have kept me here the whole time and for those two they were not exactly my friends. So I care less.

**Chuma:** (*Moving closer.*) If it turns out you are guilty chances are you can go in for a long time or face the hangman's noose.



**Rafiq:** (*Looking at Chuma in the eyes without blinking.*) I am not guilty. Those pieces of paper are not enough to proof me guilty and I am insisting that I am innocent. Get me a lawyer because I am not sure whether you won't implicate me.

**Chuma:** (*He slaps him across the face.*) I will gorge out your eyes if you don't start talking boy. You are pushing me too far.

**Rafiq:** (*Unmoved.*) That is against the law. You can't do this to me.

**Chuma:** (*Annoyed.*) Don't talk to me about the law. How much do you know about the law? By the time I am done with you, you will be too broken to pick the pieces. Just watch me do it.

**Rafiq:** (*Looking scared.*) I am just a victim of circumstances. Please sir I know nothing about the blast.

**Chuma:** Don't give me that innocent look. If you know nothing then explain what the pictures were doing in your desk.

**Rafiq:** (*Looking away.*) Matthew kept them there, I didn't know what they were and neither did I know what he was planning to do with them.

**Chuma:** (*Amused.*) Really? I thought you said earlier that you picked them on your way to school. Now tell me, what do you know about the blast?

**Rafiq:** (*Taken aback.*) I know nothing. I have said this so many times but you don't believe me.

**Chuma:** (*Stepping on his toes.*) You are not going anywhere with this. Talk before I use these blades on you. I am losing my patience everytime you open your mouth.

**Rafiq:** (*Scared.*) Please Nooooo.... Don't do that to me.

**Chuma:** (*Amused.*) Then speak up son!

**Rafiq:** That previous night Mathew told me that he had a special assignment to complete. But he never explained what the assignment was all about.

**Chuma:** Whose orders was he obeying?

**Rafiq:** I don't know. I swear to you.

**Chuma:** Talk young man. I have a feeling that you know who is behind this. Give me a name.

**Rafiq:** I have no names to give you or any other information.

*(Chuma cuts Rafiq's hand with a razor. He screams in pain.)*

**Rafiq:** (*Pressing on the cut.*) I swear I don't know.

**Chuma:** (*Ignoring him and watching him closely.*) What do you know about the brotherhood?  
Who are the members and who is their leader?

**Rafiq:** (*Facing the wall.*) I don't know anything.

**Chuma:** Are you a part of it?

**Rafiq:** No!

**Chuma:** Since you have decided to be stubborn, let's see what your stay here will do to you.  
May be it will soften you up. (*Calls out to Imara to take Rafiq away.*)

*(The setting is in the principal's office. We see him picking the receiver and dialing the number. He taps on the table as he waits to be connected.)*

**Mtawala:** Hello this is the Principal Red Hill Academy, may I speak to Sergeant Chuma? (*He holds as he waits for Chuma to come on the line.*)

**Chuma:** (*A husky voice comes through.*) Hello bwana Mtawala. Any news?

**Mtawala:** Can you find time we need to talk urgently but we cannot meet in school. Call me when you are free.

**Chuma:** Can we meet at the Diamond Meeting Chambers at two in the afternoon? Go straight to room number four. It is always reserved for security meetings.

**Mtawala:** Okay. See you then. (*Hanging up and pressing the intercom buzz and the secretary comes in immediately.*)

**Secretary:** Yes Sir.

**Mtawala:** Cancel all meetings scheduled for this afternoon. I will be leaving in a few minutes time. (*Secretary exits as Mtawala prepares to leave. He leaves soon after.*)

*(The setting is in Diamond Meeting Chambers. Mtawala approaches the reception desk and the receptionist rises, looks up, says hallo and directs him to the room where Sergeant Chuma is waiting anxiously. He knocks on the door.)*

**Chuma:** Come in.

**Mtawala:** That was fast. I thought I had to wait on you.

**Chuma:** The matter at hand is so delicate for us to wait. Any information is welcome and the faster we get to the bottom of this matter the better.

**Mtawala:** (*Nodding in agreement.*) Certainly yes!

**Chuma:** (*Securing the lock.*) Now tell me why you sounded so agitated.

**Mtawala:** Yesterday I went to the funeral committee for the students. So many things cropped up that I thought were interesting.

**Chuma:** (*Anxious.*) What things?

**Mtawala:** First there was a disagreement about who should chair the meeting. There was a group of young men that seemed to have its way inspite of the many pleas by the family members.

**Chuma:** (*Interrupting.*) Were they people you know?

**Mtawala:** Some yes, I have seen them hang around the shopping center.

**Chuma:** So what's absurd about the committee you didn't call to say they were disagreeing I know?

**Mtawala:** No! That's not the point but the conditions put for the funeral.

**Chuma:** (*Impatiently.*) What conditions?

**Mtawala:** (*Looking around as if to ascertain no one is listening.*) No coffin, no prayers, must be buried in white clothes with a big red cross on the chest, a star shaped grave and they will be lowered in the grave at four p.m.

**Chuma:** What! This is not happening. Who would think this is going on here right under our noses?

**Mtawala:** I would have sworn my boys were innocent but now I have my doubts.

**Chuma:** They don't fool me one bit. I think we need some secret agent in that meeting. There is more to it than I had anticipated.

**Mtawala:** For a time I thought I saw one of your officers but he disappeared as secretly as he had appeared.

**Chuma:** Really? Help us Dear Lord this battle is major.

**Mtawala:** I was of the opinion that we need twenty four hours surveillance around the area before and after the burial.

**Chuma:** (*Thoughtfully.*) I had underrated this group. I need to be more alert otherwise they will surprise us.

**Mtawala:** Another thing, don't send female officers. Interestingly there were no women and I don't think it was a coincidence.

**Chuma:** No wonder they call themselves the Brotherhood of all races.

**Mtawala:** I will keep my ears on the ground and will update you.

**Chuma:** That information is so valuable. I thank you most profoundly.

**Mtawala:** Not at all. We are in this together. Our integrity is at stake.

**Chuma:** (*Nodding.*) I can't agree more in my mother tongue they say "when something is pushed, it pushes others".

**Mtawala:** (*Agreeing.*) Sure. Remember we should leave in time for today's meeting.

**Chuma:** Yes I need to make arrangements for the officers to come over. We should leave now. But we can't leave together.

**Mtawala:** It's okay. I understand.

*(Mtawala exits and Sergeant Chuma follows later.)*

*(The setting is in a local hotel where the funeral committee is taking place. A young man going by the name Judas with a bald head except for some strands in the middle of the head is chairing the committee.)*

**Judas:** (*Coughing.*) So far so good we have managed to identify a burial site and the funeral will take place the day after tomorrow. The two boys will be buried in the same grave because we are brothers in life and in death.

**Old man:** (*Amazed.*) What! Hold on, you can't dictate to us what to do.

*(Everyone else is quiet as if in fear of the unknown.)*

**Judas:** (*Ignoring the old man.*) As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted, the two will go into the same grave and there is no law that forbids that, so don't waste so much time on this. The ceremony will be conducted according to what these men believed in. They had values that kept them going. Kindly adhere to what you will be told from now onwards. The cost is minimal since it is about the clothes which have been provided for by a Good Samaritan.

**Mtawala:** My students would like to sing a few songs to bid their colleagues farewell.

**Judas:** (*Stunned.*) The programme doesn't allow for that and we hope you respect that.

**Mtawala:** (*Startled.*) You can't do that; these were my students and their colleagues.

**Judas:** (*Arrogantly.*) That's something we already know and have not refuted but their participation can be spared for another occasion.

*(Mtawala stares wide eyed. In the group one can easily pick out two men wearing hats and who are constantly turning as if to ascertain who is in the room.)*

**Judas:** For now there is no more discussion and I would want to call the committee off, another thing the grave will be dug before dawn and there is a special group of men assigned to do that.

*(They all rise to depart without saying a word. The two men in hats leave quietly and no one notices which alley they disappear into.)*

*(It is early morning at the station Sergeant Chuma is in a meeting with Corporal Imara.)*

**Chuma:** *(Eagerly.)* Tell me are there any new developments from the meeting last night.

**Imara:** Not much just some weird demands that you can't use to connect those boys with the bombing.

**Chuma:** We need to watch this group that will conduct the funeral closely. They could be the missing link to the identities of the other unidentified suspects and they could also lead us to the source of the bomb and the perpetrators of the bombing.

**Imara:** *(Looking astonished.)* I don't know why I feel like our boys were framed. Could the video have been a photo shop thing? You know these days with technology a lot of things can be crafted and look real. I also think that this group that is so conspicuous in the committee could be just a bunch of kids seeking attention nothing more.

**Chuma:** These small groups can turn out to be dangerous if they go unwatched. We need to pay attention to the nitty-gritty details that could turn out to be helpful.

**Imara:** I hope it doesn't turn out to be wasted effort.

**Chuma:** Are you listening to yourself? Do you know it is better to try than just sit here and do nothing?

**Imara:** What if it turns out you are wrong in your assumptions?

**Chuma:** *(Annoyed.)* I have nothing to lose by trying but if I don't try I have everything to lose. I wouldn't want to look back one day and say I wish I did that.

**Imara:** *(Nodding in agreement though looking disappointed to have lost the argument.)* I agree with you on that.

**Chuma:** *(Irritated.)* Whether you agree or not you have a role to play because your job and mine are at stake if something else goes wrong under our watch. The citizens of this country are our responsibility. Have you forgotten the slogan "Utumishi kwa Wote"? Go, think

about the whole thing. I will call you if I need you, but don't forget to go there this evening. Remember you are undercover agents.

*(Relieved Imara leaves and Sergeant Chuma starts perusing through some files.)*

## **ACT 2**

*(It is early morning and Sergeant Chuma is preparing his office for a meeting with Mtawala and Imara. There is a knock and the two enter.)*

**Chuma:** *(Authoritatively.)* Good morning colleagues. Come in and make yourself comfortable. We are gathered here this morning so that you can give me a recap about what happened yesterday at the funeral.

**Imara and Mtawala:** *(Sitting.)* Good morning Sir.

**Chuma:** *(Addressing Imara.)* According to you in the phone call you made the day before yesterday you insisted that there was nothing new in the last committee meeting.

**Imara:** Yes sir it was just the same weird requirements.

**Chuma:** Does it mean we can now talk about the funeral?

**Imara:** Yes sir!

**Chuma:** Now that the two of you were present at the funeral please update me I am all ears.

**Imara:** When we arrived at the morgue, a group of men arrived in white clothes with red crosses hanging around their necks. Their bald heads were glistening with oil and in the middle of each head was a long lock of hair. They were a spectacle to watch and everything came to a standstill. Each one of them was holding a twig and waving it in the air and the other hand was resting on the chest. They were chanting slogans that were incoherent. Since I was with the principal he will play the part of the mourners and I will take the part of the spiritual leader who is called Judas.

**Imara:** Judas raised his voice like a commander and shouted. Halt! All is quiet until he shouts. Solidarity! Solidarity!

**Mtawala:** They respond by shouting out. Forever! Forever! For the union makes us strong. As if waiting for this, they march towards the door. Once at the door eight young men disappear into the room.

**Imara:** The commander shouted out. *(Changing his voice.)* Attention! Can you all keep quiet? Can all eyes turn to the door? As you can see the young men are walking out on bended

knees carrying the remains of their colleagues as a sign of respect. Their remains are folded in white sheets to signify purity. The big red cross signifies the burden they carried for all of us. There was jostle and bustle as people struggle to get a glimpse. You can take photos if you so wish but only when I give you permission to do that. After marching around with the bodies, the bodies will be positioned on rafters and loaded onto the hearse and the rest of you can get into the cars we have enough for everyone. After everyone is settled we have our own outriders who will lead the motorcade to the grave side. Once there, everyone must sit on the ground.

**Chuma:** Was there any video coverage?

**Imara:** Not by anyone I know because we were afraid of blowing our cover. But I think if we launch an appeal we can't miss out on some from freelance journalists.

**Chuma:** Make an effort of finding out.

**Imara:** What had happened at the morgue was just a drop of water in the sea compared with the gravesite episode. When we got there Judas ordered everyone to keep quiet. (*Imitating Judas.*) Order please we would like to begin our ceremony but before we welcome the bishop, can the choir give us some songs. A man in a long white gown led the choir by beating the drum with all his might. He led and others joined in.

**Mtawala:** It was a fiery dance. They were using so much energy you would have thought they were possessed. It was like the Kamba Kilumi dance the one they dance to when extorting demons. Dust was all over the place. One song after another they sang tirelessly.

(*Songs.*)

Bado mapambano!

Bado mapambano!

Mapambano!

Mapambano!

(*Without stopping he moves from one song to the next.*)

Bidamu binadamu ni mavumbi

na vumbini na vumbini atarudi

Mwili wake wayeyuka kama ua kama ua la bondeni

Na tukifika huko tutaimba halleluya

Makao ya raha yako huko mbinguni.....

In the sweet by and by we shall meet on the beautiful shore,

In the sweet by and by we shall meet on the beautiful shore.

From behind the crowd a whistle is blown and the singing comes to an abrupt end. We see Judas coming in clad in a black religious garb. He turns out to be the bishop of Damascus Villa, as their place of worship is called. He is flanked by six young men holding candles with their left hands and on their right hands holding twigs.

**Chuma:** (*Startled.*) Wait! Wait! Is this Judas the same guy who was chairing the funeral committee meeting?

**Mtawala:** Yes! We were equally surprised.

**Imara:** This guy, Judas enters holding an incense urn in his hands and starts addressing the gathering. Comrade power! Forever and forever long live the Brotherhood.

**Mtawala:** Long live BAR, long live BAR.

**Imara:** (*With his hand clenched into a fist.*) BAR Oieyee! BAR Oieyee!

**Mtawala:** (*Clenching his hands into a fist too.*) Oieyee! Oieyee!

**Chuma:** (*Laughing.*) Hahahaha! Don't make me laugh. Are you serious?

**Mtawala:** It was drama in broad daylight were it not for the fact that it was my students' funeral I too would have found that humorous.

**Imara:** (*Pretends to be picking the incense urn.*) Long live comrades! Long live comrades!  
Solidarity in life! Solidarity in death!

(*He stops chanting and starts talking.*) Welcome to Damascus Villa. The comrades that are resting here today have fought a good fight and have finished the race. In God's hands you rest and in our hearts you live forever. You were candles in the wind that never faded and candles that never burnt out. Instead of your deaths putting out the candle of hope, you lit more candles than you could ever imagine. These candles will keep the fire burning. We will draw strength from your short life in which you achieved more than most people achieve in a lifetime. You have left a legacy worth emulating. VIVA! VIVA!  
VIVA! A LUTA CONTINUA!



**Chuma:** I hope by a good fight they are not referring to the senseless deaths caused in that bomb blast.

**Imara:** I hope so too. You should have seen how ecstatic they were with Judas pouring wine into a container and then pouring some to the ground as if libating. Then he started shouting. A LUTA CONTINUA! A LUTA CONTINUA!

To our ancestors long life we ask, grant us we beg all our needs and help us wipe out our enemies. OIYEE! OIYEE! You may come here for your communion; our ancestors have given us a go ahead. They rose and started queuing. They all sipped from the same container and then spit some on the dead colleagues and walked away.

At Damascus Villa we are very peaceful people. A lot has been said about us which is not true. I would want you to find time to visit us and for those who want to join us membership is free and it is open. We offer our members free meals on Sunday and any other day there is a meeting. Transport is free and the jobless youth can come to us we always have something for them to do. We believe so much in equality for all. We are revolutionaries that are fighting for all. Our members are well taken care of and we don't give them a reason to leave. We encourage young people to join us for they are an assurance that the church will grow. They are eager to learn and easier to teach. We are not outlaws, we are just victims of criminals who do bad things and disguise themselves as our members. As for these young men they were disciples carrying out their duties when they met their death. Some murmurs can be heard and Judas keeps quiet to allow for that. As soon as the murmurs die down he continued. They didn't die in vain. They live on because their heroic deeds don't go with them. They have planted seeds that will sprout in due course and spread like vines on fertile ground. They are like trees from which we seek shelter when it is hot, from which we pick fruits when they are in season, whose roots hold the soil together, provide us with fuel, materials for building and when they decay provide humus to enrich the soil. That means our colleagues are useful in death and in life. Their legacy will still be here many years after we say ash to ashes.

**Mtawala:** (*Addressing Imara.*) you forgot the bit where he used the urn.

**Imara:** Oh yes! How could I forget that? He almost choked us to death with that smoke. For a moment I wondered whether it was the usual incense used in church.

**Chuma:** Those people are capable of using hard drugs but the law is funny you can't just accuse them unless you have something tangible.

**Imara:** *(Pretends to cough and shakes his hand from side to side.)* Ukumbusho wa milele na milele! Ukumbusho wa milele na milele! Ukumbusho wa milele na milele!

**Mtawala:** They all said these words in unison. Amina! LUWELE! LUWELE! LUWELE!  
LUWELE! LUWELE! LUWELE

**Imara:** *(Using a commanding voice.)* It's now time to go to the gravesite. Everyone else remains seated as the members of Damascus Villa carry their colleagues shoulder high to the grave. BUT! Women members remain seated. You are allowed to stand when the body is lowered in the grave. Disobedience is taken seriously and doesn't go unpunished whether you are a member or not. If you disobey it means the ceremony has to be cancelled and scheduled for another day and I hope you all understand the implication.

**Mtawala:** They are the most organized group I have seen in the recent past and they adhere to rules word for word. Then the singing began.

Luwele Luwele luwele luwele luwele Nyasae amlinde

Tunaenda kwa baba tunaenda tunaenda tunaenda tunaenda

Tunaenda tunaenda Nyasaye amlinde

Utaacha marafiki utaenda utaenda mbinguni kwa baba

Thiino ti yakwa nikwihitukira kworwo iguru tiguu Ngai

Ndagiikatia araika makanjonya mandware iguru na ndingiciiria uhoro wa mucii urithi.

Vava vonyere mwikulu va vonyere mwikulu.

They reached the grave and all goes quiet.

**Imara:** You may rise now but keep some distance from the grave we need space around here. He waited for a short time as the crowd approaches looking uncertain and walking cautiously and then he continues with the ceremony. It's now time to return the bodies to the soil, *(Raising his voice.)* From ashes to ashes! *(Mimics Judas and pretends to throw in a handful of soil.)* Can I have the men assigned to lower the bodies jump into the grave. Another group will hand the bodies to them. Do it slowly because the bodies must touch the ground at exactly four. Ensure that the bodies intersect to form capital letter T. The significance is that they are together now and forever. *(Pauses.)* You should have seen

the way non-members craned their heads to see what was going on and then the singing began.

**Songs:** This world is not my home and I am just passing by

if heaven was not my home dear Lord where else could I go?

The angels beckon me from heaven open doors

and I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

Lord you know well I have no friend like you.

If heaven was not my home dear Lord where else could I go

The angels beckon me from heaven open doors

and I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

Then Judas lifted his hand and the singing stopped and he continued. It's time to place flowers on the grave and there are people assigned to do that. Place the flowers and ensure they spell the word BAR. As you can see the grave is flat and the mound is missing because we do things differently. At this point cameras were zooming to take a better glimpse and then he went on. (*Arrogantly.*) I know we are going to make headlines once more but I hope this time you have something positive to say about Damascus Villa we are just ordinary citizens who do things differently. I hope one day you will be able to embrace us because whatever we believe in is for the good of everyone and liberation for all. VIVA! HOORAY! VIVA! HOORAY! VIVA! VIVA! LONG LIVE BAR!

**Mtawala:** After this there was a lot of shouting throwing of clenched fists in the air. You would have been forgiven for thinking it was a political rally as they went, BAR! BAR! BAR! long live! BAR, BAR, BAR LONG LIVE! And then they broke into a song. Solidarity forever! Solidarity Forever! Solidarity forever! For BAR makes us strong.

**Imara:** (*Looking contented.*) The ceremony is over and please remember our doors are open. Please pay us a visit anytime. We don't ask you to contribute anything because we are self-sufficient. We are peace loving and I can sense some officers were disguised and hanging around expecting trouble. You have nothing to worry about. We are law-abiding citizens. Don't go away without taking food or a drink. There is plenty of food and all are welcome. When everyone has had their fill you may go in peace. I am telling you food was plenty.

**Chuma:** There is something about this church that makes me edgy. If they are law abiding what makes him suspect they are being watched.

**Imara:** Whatever they did yesterday is just not enough to connect them to the bombing.

**Mtawala:** The fact that they buried the students already makes them look suspicious.

**Chuma:** One thing is certain when am done with the investigation they will not look so innocent. Although am yet to lay my finger on the exact thing but soon I will.

**Imara:** They could just be a cult looking for footing.

**Chuma:** There is more than what meets the eye. Can you please tell me for instance who funds them? From what you just told me they are spending lavishly and yet most of them are quite young.

**Imara:** Rumors doing rounds indicate that they get funding from other countries.

**Mtawala:** I think it is advisable to watch this group closely. Measures should be put in place to ensure every move they make is watched.

**Chuma:** Rest assured I will leave no stone unturned.

**Imara:** You have my support and the principal can watch the students for us.

**Mtawala:** I will let you in on any new development.

**Chuma:** You may go now but remember we are in this together. *(They rise to leave.)*

*(A day after the funeral Taabu has nowhere to stay. He is walking away unsure of where to go.)*

**Taabu:** *(Thinking loudly.)* I have overstayed at my teacher's place and he said I can't go back. I understand, actually he has been so kind and I don't want to put him into trouble.

**Inner voice:** Have you forgotten Rafiq's offer?

**Taabu:** No! But I am scared.

**Inner voice:** Remember cowards die many deaths before their deaths. You are not one of them.

**Taabu:** What if it doesn't work?

**Inner voice:** What makes you think it won't work you haven't tried.

**Taabu:** I have tried so many things in life but they never worked.

**Inner voice:** So many things yes, but not this one no give it a try. What if it works?

**Taabu:** I will try it because I have no choice.

**Inner voice:** Then try it you have nothing to lose. It could be the only opportunity you have to make something out of yourself.

**Taabu:** Why should I trust this guy? All the people I have trusted have always frustrated me.

**Inner voice:** Rafiq says he is a good guy.

**Taabu:** Rafiq! Rafiq! The best he has done is put me in trouble. I don't know why I trust him.

**Inner voice:** Just trust him this once. It might turn out to be good.

**Taabu:** *(Touching his forehead and closing his eyes.)* Okay! I will try.

**Inner voice:** *(More convincingly.)* Try it! Trying never killed anyone.

**Taabu:** *(Changes direction and starts walking in the direction of the old garage.)* I hope am not making a mistake. I pray that I don't jump from the frying pan into the fire.

**Inner voice:** Go! Go! And don't look back there is nothing there but memories that bring sorrow.

**Inner voice:** Maybe you will get food, shelter and clothing. You can't ask for more.

**Taabu:** *(Nodding.)* That's more than I need.

**Inner voice:** Bravo! Bravo!

**Taabu:** I can't celebrate yet.

**Inner voice:** There seems to be light at the end of the dark tunnel that has been your life.

**Taabu:** *(Smiling to himself.)* Maybe finally I will say goodbye to misery.

**Inner voice:** Don't put maybe this could be it. Negative thoughts will just derail you. Don't let opportunities pass you by for they knock only once.

**Taabu:** *(Increasing his pace as if afraid he might change his mind.)* I can't afford to lose this opportunity for anything in this life. I will do this. It is not time to turn back now. *(He hears clapping only to turn smiling and realizes it was an inner struggle.)*

*(The setting is inside old garage. The walls are full of spooky graffiti. Hardcore music is playing in the background. Four teenagers are seated on an old car bonnet playing cards. One young lady is reading a book at a corner. Within the garage is a lovely bungalow. Taabu enters.)*

**Taabu:** *(Amazed.)* Hello!

**Lady X:** Taabu Junior what took you so long?

**Taabu:** *(Surprised.)* And who are you?

**Lady X:** My name is Lady X the captain around here.

**Taabu:** And how do you know my name? Have we met before?

**Lady X:** Your name came ahead of you. We have been waiting for you.

**Taabu:** Waiting for me? I think you are confusing me with someone else.

**Lady X:** No, the Switch will explain all things to you.

**Taabu:** Aha! The Switch? I have a message for him.

**Lady X:** He has been waiting. Relax he will be here in no time.

You can come to the house.

**Taabu:** I can wait here.

**Lady X:** Hahahaha! No you can't. My boss wouldn't like that.

**Taabu:** Okay.

**Lady X:** Soon you will get used to all of us here. We are one big family that lives in harmony.

**Taabu:** I'm not here to stay. I'm just delivering my message and leaving.

**Lady X:** Wait until you meet all of us and tell me whether you still want to go away. This is a home away from home. Let me introduce you to my friends.

*(She takes Taabu to where guys are playing cards.)*

**Lady X:** Meet Johnnie, Sammie, Trish and Kamaa.

**Johnnie:** Welcome Taabu!

**Taabu:** Thank you.

*(Taabu starts walking around looking at the graffiti on the wall. Lady X takes him through the graffiti.)*

**Taabu:** What's the meaning of all these?

**Lady X:** The cruel face of the society that we live in.

**Taabu:** A vampire's head with its chain like hair. That's scary.

**Lady X:** The sword like canines represents the strategies of the upper class in society that seeks to suck the lives of poor men like us. We are languishing in poverty while they swim in affluence to which we have contributed with our sweat.

**Taabu:** And what do the chains stand for?

**Lady X:** Iron rule! Dictatorship that allows us no freedom of expression. But that will quickly fade away. Do you see that red cross?

**Taabu:** Yes, the one being carried by the dog?

**Lady X:** The dog signifies you and me and the cross denotes the burdens we have been forced to carry

**Taabu:** Is that so?

**Lady X:** Your stay here will enlighten you on the atrocities afflicted on us.

**Taabu:** Are you saying our problems are man-made.

**Lady X:** There you go. We must fight for our place in society. We deserve equal treatment. That's why we are here.

**Taabu:** I don't understand.

**Lady X:** And you will. Your friend Rafiq is part of us. That's why he sent you here because he knew you would have a home here.

**Taabu:** And is that the reason he is at the police station?

**Lady X:** Yes!

**Taabu:** What did he do?

**Lady X:** He was carrying the cross, trying to end this oppression. But he will be out very soon.

**Taabu:** I'm interested to know more.

**Lady X:** The Switch will tell you everything after the oath taking. But this fight is not for the fainthearted.

**Judas:** Hae everyone!

**Taabu:** (*Opens his eyes wide.*) Bishop! Can someone explain to me what is going on here?

**Judas:** You are surprised I can see that.

**Taabu:** Yes I am.

**Lady X:** Taabu this is the bishop who started this haven where homeless boys like you can run to in times of trouble. He ensures they are well taken care of. I know he will do the same for you.

**Taabu:** Can he help me go back to school?

**Lady X:** People go to school so that they can one day get employment and fed for themselves. I don't think you need to go back to school we are going to ensure you get skills that will help you earn more money than you could ever imagine. We are not poor the only problem is that our wealth is in the hands of chosen few and we are getting it back .The bishop is here specifically to meet with you.

**Taabu:** (*Looking startled.*) Me! Why?

**Lady X:** He will explain that to you in details when you get into the house.

*(Inside the house.)*

**Judas:** *(Gesturing with his hands.)* Welcome home son. Consider this your second home.

**Taabu:** *(Admiring the table-room.)* Thank you.

**Judas:** *(Opening his arms.)* You are most welcome in this house we live like brothers and lack is a foreign word here. We have enough for everyone. I will show you around the house but before I do that there are some rituals we need to carry out.

**Taabu:** *(Looking surprised.)* What! And why?

**Judas:** Yes Taabu. We need to be sure whether you are for us or against us. An oath is a covenant that gives us a sense of belonging. We need something that will always remind us who we are to one another. Whatever we do or say remains with the members not outsiders. Are you following me?

**Taabu:** Yes. But you are a bishop do you have to be secretive?

**Judas:** Even bishops need not trust just everyone. I am a prophet sent by God to liberate the youth and mostly young men who have been forsaken not just at home but also in society. I saw this in a dream and I have no peace until I accomplish my mission of rescuing you and many others from the shackles of doom. This country belongs to us and not to the few that are enjoying the fruits of our labour. We toil and others enjoy themselves. If you join us you will never regret. You too will enjoy what rightfully belongs to you. Do you know that the likes of your grandma wouldn't be so bitter if they were to be given what rightfully belongs to them?

**Taabu:** *(Confused.)* Really!

**Judas:** *(Faking sadness.)* That's the reality and very few people will tell you the truth like I am doing today. Do you know why?

**Taabu:** Of course not.

**Judas:** Because your suffering and your toil elevates them to another level. But we are going to put an end to this.

**Taabu:** How will you do that?

**Judas:** I need an army of young men and the rest will be very easy.

**Taabu:** Why young men and not women?



**Judas:** (*Laughing mockingly.*) Hahahaha! Who hangs around the corners? Whom do you see leaning against walls in the shopping centers? When the police come calling whom do they take away? Tell me Taabu is it not our young men?

**Taabu:** (*Nodding in agreement.*) Surely yes!

**Judas:** (*Contented with the progress he is making.*) Another thing women never go to war traditionally and even in the bible .Actually girls and women in general are not good at keeping secrets. But then why would we want to have them here after all the system favors them. How many forums have been held across the globe in the name of the girl-child and women? Tell me son.

**Taabu:** Many.

**Judas:** Don't boys have needs? God has chosen me to be the voice of the voiceless. Our boys have no one to talk for them and when that call came I couldn't ignore it. I am making progress and I have become a source of solace for many and I hope you will entrust yourself to me not because you have no home but because you have an obligation to set yourself free forever. You will no longer be insignificant trust you me. You will make headlines.

**Taabu:** I hope not the way Cohen, Mathew and Rafiq did.

**Judas:** Death comes anyway if your time comes. It doesn't matter where you will be death is inevitable. Don't worry about Rafiq everything is fine.

**Taabu:** Rafiq is not okay he is in jail.

**Judas:** (*Amused.*) He is getting the best treatment there. We have people watching him around the clock.

**Taabu:** He didn't look too well taken care of the last time I was there.

**Judas:** Some measures have been put in place to avoid that. He will be out as soon as the temperatures call down. You can pay him a visit if you don't trust me and see for yourself.

**Taabu:** It is okay.

**Judas:** (*Watching him closely.*) So now are you with us or against us?

**Taabu:** I am with you if this is what will set us free.

*(A group of young men rush into the room and hug Taabu. Unknown to him the conversation was being wired to other rooms.)*

**Judas:** Welcome to the club. We can proceed to the next step. Bring the glasses and the wine.

*(Taabu looks on too dazed to speak.)* Lady X please pour the wine into the glasses. Can everyone take their seat now so that we may proceed? Lift your glasses and we all say!

**Everyone:** Cheers! Cheers! Cheers!

**Judas:** You may take your wine now.

**Taabu:** *(Handing over the glass.)* I can't take this.

**Judas:** *(Pleading.)* Please do, for it will not be taken kindly if you don't. Remember you are one of us and birds of a feather flock together. From now on it will not be I but us. You don't have to take it all just sip.

**Taabu:** *(Hesitating and then sips.)* Okay!

**Judas:** *(Clenching his fist.)* Kudos! Kudos! Now we move to the next level where we sign the contract of being together. Bring all the items. *(Lady X picks them from a nearby table.)*

**Lady X:** Please give me your index finger *(Without warning she pierces it with a needle. Taabu flinches in pain.)*

**Judas:** Please ensure it drips on the page that has his name and put some drops into the red jar. *(Watching closely until it is done.)* Taabu you are now a partaker of the kingdom. The covenant has been sealed. Remember from now on you have access to anything that belongs to the brotherhood. Always keep in mind that; you can't divulge any information to outsiders for any reason whatsoever. The covenant that you have just made bides you to each one of us and you can't back out. The good thing about it is that we will never do anything that would make you want to leave. As a matter of fact you will find yourself bringing in more of your friends like Rafiq did by bringing you. *(Taabu is just nodding uncertainly.)* What we did was the initiation bit other rituals will follow. You will graduate from one level to the next depending on how you behave. If you learn fast the better it is for you. You wait for the Switch to explain the rest.

*(The setting is in a spacious empty room. Teacher Elias enters. Lady X and all the teenagers bow down to teacher Elias.)*

**Taabu:** *(Transfixed.)* Teacher Elias!

**Elias:** Ah! Taabu Junior!

**Taabu:** *(Gasping for air.)* No! This can't be.

**Elias:** I am sorry I have shocked you this much but you will get used to this. I would react the same way in your situation.

**Taabu:** Your presence in this place bewilders me.

**Elias:** This is my second home. I know it sounds weird but we are the people chosen to liberate the youth. We are disciples anointed to change the destiny of many people.

**Taabu:** You are an honorable man. A respectable member of society and you live so well you have no business here.

**Elias:** Forget my titles at school Taabu, what we do here is far more honorable.

**Taabu:** Forgive my biased judgment but this place appeases to poor people like me who have nowhere to go.

**Elias:** Good! Poor people yes! The graffiti on the wall epitomizes the reality in our society.

**Taabu:** So you embrace violence and the shedding of blood to pursue your course?

**Elias:** Not my course it is ours. We are oppressed, bound, forsaken and forgotten. We are rotting in dungeons while people enjoy themselves in palaces. Permit me to answer by asking you a question. What in this life can you die for?

**Taabu:** (*Bitterly.*) Nothing at the moment, Nothing! My life is meaningless. It was beginning to take shape when you came in and I see it crumbling into pieces.

**Elias:** I am not your enemy. You will understand this soon because I will turn out to be your best friend. The greatest men in history found purpose not in their selfish ambition but in the quest of making the world a better place. That's why we are here so that we can help bring purpose in people's lives.

**Taabu:** What purpose?

**Elias:** Giving hope to the hopeless, a voice to the voiceless and most of all a shoulder to cry on. And we are determined to leave a legacy before our deaths. A man is defined by the legacy that he leaves behind when his time on earth is over.

**Taabu:** Everyone dies whether you leave a legacy or not. I do appreciate your motivating words teacher but am here not to listen to your words but to see the Switch I am yet to recover from the shock of seeing you.

**Lady X:** You are talking to him Taabu.

**Taabu:** (*Fighting back anger.*) You are the Switch? I hope this is a bad dream. The whole time and you never said anything.

**Elias:** (*Looking apologetic.*) What did you expect? A hulk of a man? Please Taabu I didn't know where to begin. I hope you understand.

**Taabu:** (*Struggles to support himself.*) I thought...

**Elias:** It's okay, I don't look or even come any close to the teacher you have known all this time. Looks can be deceiving .But trust me and allow me to help you. I have never treated you wrongly and I never will.

**Taabu:** How is Rafiq? They said he was involved in the blast at Mavuno Supermarket .Is that true?

**Elias:** Yes he was.

**Taabu:** How could that be? Rafiq would never engage himself in such crimes. Why did you pretend not to know about it that day when I was chased away?

**Elias:** It wasn't a crime Taabu. I didn't tell you because I was afraid you would get scared.

**Taabu:** (*Fighting back tears.*) Innocent people died yet you say it wasn't a crime? Are you serious?

**Lady X:** Don't talk to rabbi like that.

**Elias:** It's okay Lady X; he lives in his own idealistic world. When we lay the facts bare before him that bitterness will fade into oblivion. Taabu tell me, who owns Mavuno Supermarket?

**Taabu:** I don't know.

**Lady X:** It's the pigs.

**Taabu:** Who are the pigs?

**Lady X:** Tycoons who run this town. Principal Mtawala is one of them. They keep everything for themselves while we languish in poverty.

**Elias:** The same people who want our slum to be demolished so that they can construct a manufacturing plant on that land.

**Taabu:** (*Startled.*) That's inhuman! And where will we go? We have no other home.

**Elias:** You have the answer to that question Taabu.

**Taabu:** We can't go anywhere! The slum is our only home.

**Elias:** Well spoken.

**Taabu:** The authorities need to be informed. This is unfair.

**Elias:** The authorities have stakes in the project. They are paid millions to sustain their silence.  
That's how it works Taabu.

**Taabu:** No! This can't be.

**Elias:** Yes, and until we do something we shall be declared displaced in our own soil.

**Taabu:** (*Stammering.*) How can people be so...so...?

**Elias:** (*Filling in for him.*) Heartless! Because of greed and power. Someone has to do something  
and that's why we are here Taabu. Join our course!

**Taabu:** So that's what Rafiq was trying to do?

**Elias:** He was helping Matthew and Cohen who died fighting for what rightfully belongs to us.

**Taabu:** There has to be another way teacher. No one has to die.

**Elias:** Our founding fathers fought and died so that we may attain freedom. Nothing precious is  
gained without bloodshed. Join our course and live a purpose filled life!

**Taabu:** And what will I have to do?

**Elias:** You shall be given your assignment but you must first take an oath of allegiance.

**Taabu:** And will my assignment involve any bloodshed?

**Elias:** Whatever it will take son. This is a fight only for the strong hearted but the reward is  
fulfilling. You drive the best car and live in the greatest mansion in the town.

**Taabu:** I can't, my consciousness will kill me.

**Lady X:** And where will you go Taabu? Rabbi is offering not only to take care of you but to  
reward you with riches. Soon you shall regain your dignity as a man.

**Taabu:** I'm sorry but I can't.

*(A young man-Nathan- enters running. He stops,  
pants and then stands upright.)*

**Nathan:** He is dead!

**Elias:** Who?

**Nathan:** Rafiq!

**All:** What?

**Elias:** When did this happen?

**Nathan:** An hour ago in the police station. They said it was food poisoning but he was tortured  
to death.

**Taabu:** No! They can't kill him. (*Taabu starts to sob in bitterness.*)

**Elias:** It's okay Taabu. He was a good soldier.

**Taabu:** It's not okay! Rafiq was a good man, my best friend!

**Elias:** He is in a good place Taabu. The good about it is that he died fighting. But we must avenge his death.

**Taabu:** *(Standing up.)* I want to take the oath.

**Elias:** Are you sure?

**Taabu:** *(Looking contented.)* Yes!

**Elias:** Once you take the final oath there is no turning back!

**Taabu:** I'm sure, I'm ready for it Rabbi.

**Elias:** Good! Bring the book and the blade.

*(Lady X exits and comes back with a big book and a blade. The rest of the guys kneel down.)*

**Elias:** Repeat these words after me.

*(Elias starts reading from the book as Taabu repeats after him.)*

**Taabu:** I Taabu Junior present myself as a spokesman for truth and pledge today by the god of justice to defend the rights of my fellow men from all oppression. I shall not be afraid of death neither about any assignment bestowed upon me. This is the vow I take today in the presence of Rabbi and my fellow disciples.

**Elias:** *(Clapping.)* Well done! Later you will meet other major stakeholders in this noble mission. We have enough support from many quarters. You may go now someone will take you through some classes to ensure you are familiar with our schedule.

**Lady X:** *(Looking anxious.)* You took so long, the waiting almost killed me.

**Elias:** I had to ensure the boy is on our side. It wasn't actually long it was just the usual thing. You are always anxious and always expecting them to back out.

**Lady X:** It is human to feel that way, after all not everyone is a dare-devil like you.

**Elias:** *(Looking irritated.)* Withdraw that it isn't amusing.

**Lady X:** You know very well I respect and admire you. If only I was a quarter of who you are we would achieve so much.

**Elias:** You are one hell of an admirable Lady and I can't give you up for anything in the world.

**Lady X:** *(Smiling.)* Thank you .I am curious to know how you convince these boys to join us without any resistance.

**Elias:** That's easy as a b c .You first identify the issues they are struggling with in life and then offer solutions. If they are convinced that you will deliver them then you have them to keep.

**Lady X:** (*Amused.*) Really! That sounds so cool.

**Elias:** It is X. The boys of this country are a forgotten lot. As long as you are a male it is enough for people to be wary about you. The society has failed them.

**Lady X:** May I know how?

**Elias:** (*Smiling.*) Don't be naïve .You know very well girls are watched around the clock. Whereas the boys are left on their own.

**Lady X:** Wait! Aren't I here and I am a girl.

**Elias:** I don't even consider you one. You are a tomboy and you should have been a boy from the word go. Aren't you the one who always tells us that your mother has done everything possible to remind you about your place in society?

**Lady X:** (*Laughing.*) Ha! Ha! Ha! You should have seen her lecturing me day and night but I still defied her. Sometimes I look back and feel guilty about it.

**Elias:** I thank God you did otherwise who would I be working with?

**Lady X:** We were meant to be together.

**Elias:** Back to the boys, let me tell you one thing our boys lack mentors. For instance so many homes have no father figure and if they are there they are busy making money or in drinking dens taking kumi kumi and other cheap stuff.

**Lady X:** That's so true.

**Elias:** There are separate roles for mothers and separate roles for fathers. Mothers have become breadwinners as well as mentors. Therefore when these boys come to us and we are ready to listen and offer the father figure they can't go away. Their ego is bruised and their masculinity is diminishing. We are acting saviors by giving them a chance to assert themselves and allowing them to hit back at society.

**Lady X:** (*Nodding in agreement.*) Yeah! The society is really unfair sometimes and this is our chance to fight for equality.

**Elias:** We are doing well and so far nothing has been connected to us.

**Lady X:** So far so good, who would think that Elias the teacher is our Rabbi?

**Elias:** I would be the last suspect. Mtawala the principal would swear about my innocence anytime, any day. Sometimes it amuses me when he updates me about his meetings with Chuma not knowing I dine and wine at the enemy's camp. Actually this helps me lay my strategies well.

**Lady X:** That works for us because when they lay traps we are able to avoid them. I think even the school environment is conducive for our plans.

**Elias:** (*Nodding.*) Certainly yes! The school has allowed me to identify the needy ones, the adventurous ones and I prey on their vulnerability. When opportunity allows I teach them some Marxist ideologies.

**Lady X:** (*Showing a thumb up sign.*) Kudos! You never cease to amaze me. You are full of ideas. No wonder you are rabbi.

**Elias:** There is no difference between me and Moses who led the children of Israel out of Egypt. I am delivering a whole generation from the shackles of doom.

**Lady X:** There is no difference between me and John the Baptist I go ahead of you preparing the route for you.

**Elias:** And you are good at that. Keep up! I will forever be indebted to you for the way you treat these boys. You treat them as if they were your own children.

**Lady X:** They don't give me a reason to treat them any other way.

**Elias:** (*Changing the tone.*) That's fine remember our assignment is drawing near and I hope everything is set.

**Lady X:** (*Looking excited.*) How could I forget such a major event actually I am eagerly waiting for the D-day.

**Elias:** This will mark another rise up the ladder for you and I.

**Lady X:** It is a high time we got a pay rise.

**Elias:** (*Looking contented.*) This is guaranteed or do you think bringing down a building on five thousand plus of our enemies is small. It is like using a roller-coaster. It is exciting and I can feel the blood sizzling in my veins. But! You have to master all the effort you can so that this boys are fully convinced that it is for their own good.

**Lady X:** I have never failed you Rabbi. What reason would I have to do that?

**Elias:** (*Smiling.*) I know but do you know that even the Holy bible says that remind me as often as you can lest I forget.



**Lady X:** (*Sarcastically.*) Look at you! Did I hear you quote the bible with such audacity?

**Elias:** Oh Yes! I use it when it is convenient .Is that a sin?

**Lady X:** No!

(*There is a knock on the door and sergeant Imara enters even before they answer.*)

**Imara:** Sorry I startled you but I didn't mean to. What were you discussing?

**Elias:** Just the usual stuff when we are preparing for a major event. Why do you look agitated?

**Imara:** Do you people know how hard it is to pretend to be what you are not? Pretending to be a saint when you know too well you are the devil they are looking for is no mean task.

**Lady X:** Relax! Don't worry when we are done with them next week; we are going to hit international headlines. Don't you forget the goodies that come with that? Can I attend the boys now; you can call me if you need me. (*Lady X exits.*)

**Imara:** (*Lifting his hands in the air.*) Okay! Okay! But we must maintain a low profile because the police are really trying day and night to piece together any information they can get to apprehend as many suspects as possible.

**Elias:** Where do we come in to this?

**Imara:** We overexposed ourselves during the funeral and now we are a marked group. But they are yet to connect us to anything related to the bombings taking place.

**Elias:** That's okay but we will be careful.

**Imara:** Remember the event is fast approaching and this time we should be more discreet. Where are the boys?

**Elias:** They are with Judas going through a rigorous recruitment exercise to ensure everything is in place. We are not leaving anything to chance. They will even have a chance to watch the movies on bombings across the world for example the Lockerbie bombing, The New York twin towers and closer home the 1998 US embassy bombings and the Westgate.

**Imara:** (*Looking confused.*) Why would they watch these? Aren't they going to back out? I think that's the last thing we want.

**Elias:** Off course not! They can't back out We have doctored the movies to only show what we want them to see. As a matter of fact they will walk out more convinced than ever.

**Imara:** (*Shaking his head.*) Now I understand why you are Rabbi and not me.

**Elias:** Hahaha! I hope that is a compliment. Soon and very soon you are going to rise like a shooting star and what they give you in the forces will look like an insult. By the way you

would not need to work there anymore were it not for the fact that we need you to keep us posted.

**Imara:** And what plans do you have about your teaching career?

**Elias:** I can't quit right now and you know why?

**Imara:** No!

**Elias:** We still need more disciples and the school seems like a suitable ground for that. But if by any chance someone suitable is posted in our school I will delegate the duties to him and move on to serve you at another level.

**Imara:** *(Nodding.)* That sounds cool.

**Elias:** You can't imagine that the ones I can't convince in school end up looking up for me when the sad realities of life hit them. And it becomes so easy.

**Imara:** I would like to go now. Please remember that you need to keep your head low. The police are everywhere.

**Elias:** *(Raising his voice.)* Wait! You can't go yet. Our greatest assignment is next week and don't you worry because we can't afford to derail our plans.

**Imara:** Plans are underway to ensure that Red Hill Academy is secure for the festival.

**Elias:** And we are equally prepared.

**Imara:** Your guts surprise me Rabbi and give me the strength to go on.

**Elias:** Just hold on until you hear the plans I have and which are already taking place even as we speak.

**Imara:** *(Looking amused.)* Am all ears.

**Elias:** *(Shifting in his seat.)* All the equipment we need is being ferried to my house every day.

**Imara:** Seriously! That's dangerous.

**Elias:** Oh no! It is very easy I just put it on the back seat and in the boot packaged like ordinary shopping and I just drive in as calmly as possible. Who would suspect Elias the saint?

**Imara:** Oh my God! You are a genius.

**Elias:** By Friday everything will be in school.

**Imara:** *(Curious.)* That's one handle overcome. How will the boys get in?

**Elias:** That is easier than the previous one. I will just hire a school bus put the boys in and have them driven to school in full school uniform.

**Imara:** That is very risky. They will be searched.

**Elias:** I know that and my boys will have nothing on them. If anything the search will be very fast because the students from all the schools are required to leave their luggage in the bus and walk through the check point. Within no time our plan will be underway.

**Imara:** You must have read about Carlos the Jackal enough times otherwise where would you get all these ideas.

**Elias:** Life hardens us and there is no better feeling than contentment especially when you achieve what you believe in. Experience is a good teacher the old adage says.

**Imara:** What will the boys do once they are inside?

**Elias:** That's the training they are going through now so that everybody will know what role to play.

**Imara:** It sounds like a movie.

**Elias:** It is a movie but a real one not fictional.

**Imara:** It seems my work is less now.

**Elias:** You have a major assignment that of convincing Chuma about our security firm and that we don't need sniffer dogs in a school.

**Imara:** Explain that to me.

**Elias:** We will pick a firm that works with us and for us. Sniffer dogs can't be there for whatever reason because they will betray us. The reason is that humans can't smell bombs but trained dogs can.

**Imara:** I am going to have sleepless nights convincing Chuma and at the same time pretending to be innocent.

**Elias:** Don't forget that I will be helping you by convincing the principal of the same. I know Chuma will seek our opinion. At the end of the day Mtawala has the upper hand in what should be done in school. He can't make decisions without consulting me. He plays right into the enemy's camp unknowingly.

**Imara:** I think we have exhausted everything for now.

**Elias:** You may go now plan and wait. I am going back to school because a lot needs to be done and I can't afford to be away. I want to pick the strategic points where to place the explosives.

*(Elias and Imara exit.)*

### ACT 3

*(The setting is in the school and everyone is busy putting in the final touches.)*

**Mtawala:** *(Sounds ecstatic.)* The big day is here and it is such a beautiful day. Nothing can go wrong now.

**Chuma:** We have ensured that all buses will be checked and everything is working according to plan.

**Mtawala:** I hope you honored the promise on sniffer dogs.

**Chuma:** Yes I did, I couldn't forget that. I don't want our students to be afraid. I also ensured that our police presence is not felt so much otherwise they would panic.

**Mtawala:** I think we were overreacting the other time.

**Chuma:** Don't count your chicks yet. These people wait until we let our guards down and then hit us when we least expect it.

**Mtawala:** I understand that but today I will prove your assumptions wrong. That group is so insignificant to try anything on our school.

**Chuma:** If there is a group that you should be wary about it is the Brotherhood.

**Mtawala:** May I know why?

**Chuma:** Your students died in a bombing incident in which they were not victims but the perpetrators. As if that was not enough who buries them? Judas of all the people! That rogue preacher and I always wonder whether he is ordained or he is just a self-proclaimed preacher. Rumors have it that more of your students could be involved or are being recruited.

**Mtawala:** Don't tell me you still hold on to the rumors bit.

**Chuma:** One day I will link this puzzle and don't say I didn't warn you.

*(There's a knock on the door and Elias enters.)*

**Elias:** Sorry for interrupting you but I came to tell you people are already settling in the hall and you may prepare for your speech now.

**Mtawala:** *(Adjusting his tie.)* Line up the scouts I must inspect a guard of honor. Such opportunities knock only once in a lifetime and if you shy away they slip through your fingers never to return.

**Elias:** *(Saluting him.)* I am happy for you. I long for the day when it will be my turn.

**Mtawala:** Soon! Very soon Elias. I knew it the first day I saw you. You are destined for greatness.

**Chuma:** (*Excited.*) This must mean a lot to you. I have not seen anyone so happy in the recent past. It reminds me about the day that I graduated from Kiganjo Police College.

**Mtawala:** I have no words to express this. (*Addressing Elias.*) Please call me when everyone is set I want to make a grand entrance.

**Elias:** Today is your day. Please enjoy it to the full. (*Elias bows and exits.*)

**Chuma:** That is a nice teacher. One can't imagine he is your deputy. I admire the zest with which he runs errands for you. You must have a lot of trust in him.

**Mtawala:** He is like a son to me. If he ever leaves I will be heartbroken.

**Chuma:** You can't hold him here. Just let him go if opportunity allows.

**Mtawala:** I would want the best for him. But to get someone like him takes a long time.

(*Phone rings. Elias is on the line.*)

**Mtawala:** That was Elias we may go now but give me a minute to freshen up. (*Enters the washroom and looks in the mirror.*) I can't believe this. Jehovah you are so faithful. I am looking good and this attire really brings me out just the way I like it. Your mercies endure forever. I don't know how to thank you for this day. (*Walks out looking contented.*)

**Chuma:** I like that glow on your face.

**Mtawala:** We may go now.

(*A student in green uniform and dark goggles enters hurriedly.*)

**The Student:** (*Breathless.*) No you can't! You must listen to me. I have something important to tell you.

**Mtawala:** (*Pushing him aside.*) It can wait. See me after I make the speech.

**The student:** (*Going down on his knees.*) I beg you in the name of God. It can't wait it is a matter of life and death.

**Chuma:** Okay! Let's hear what he has to say and do it fast son we have better things to do with our precious time.

**Mtawala:** It had better turn out to be good because if it isn't I will spank senses in to that head.

**The Student:** (*Removing his goggles.*) I am Taabu.

**Mtawala:** (*Getting him by the collar.*) You must have some guts to come to my office.

**Taabu:** Please let me talk and I am sure you will be grateful I came.

**Chuma:** (*Eyeing him suspiciously.*) Let him talk.

**Taabu:** I am with someone else hiding in a corner by the door .If you allow him in we will be fast.

**Mtawala:** (*Agitated.*) Call him.

**Chuma and Mtawala:** Rafiq!

**Chuma:** (*Surprised.*) I thought you were dead?

**Taabu:** I know you are surprised as I was yesterday when he appeared but that's not important now. We will explain later.

**Chuma:** What is so urgent that it can't wait?

**Rafiq:** Please close this door and ensure no one else comes in and most of all teacher Elias.

**Mtawala:** (*Still perplexed by the turn of events.*) Why?

**Taabu:** Close the door first and promise to give us witness protection because what we are about to say will cost us our lives. (*Chuma closes the door.*)

**Chuma:** You have my word.

**Rafiq:** A bomb will explode in less than an hour in the hall if you don't do something.

**Chuma:** How sure are you? Everyone was checked this morning.

**Taabu:** We are sure because Elias set it up last night and completed it earlier today. One of your officers is also involved .Have you questioned why officer Imara was convincing you not to bring dogs.

**Mtawala:** (*Recovering from the shock.*) Wait a minute and Elias too.

**Chuma:** May I know why you are telling us now.

**Rafiq:** Teacher Elias lied to us and recruited us in the name of helping us. He convinced Taabu that I was dead in order to get him into the Brotherhood. When I reappeared we realized we had been duped but this can wait we are running short of precious time which we do not have. You must get everyone out of that hall.

**Mtawala:** (*Too anxious.*) Let me go and tell them to run out.

**Chuma:** Wait! We must act with a lot of caution. How much time do we have approximately?

**Taabu:** Forty five minutes.

**Chuma:** (*Addressing Taabu and Rafiq.*)You two get into the washroom

**Mtawala:** You can't keep them here.

**Chuma:** (*Changing his tone.*) From now on do as I tell you because I am trained on how to handle such eventuality.

**Mtawala:** (*Looking uncertain.*) Anything you say.

**Chuma:** Call Elias and remain calm as you possibly can.

**Mtawala:** (*Talking on the phone.*) Elias can you please come over I can't find my speech.

**Chuma:** Remember we must not panic.

(*Elias enters and bends as if to pick something on the table.*)

**Chuma:** (*Quickly moves in on him and presses a pistol on his back.*) Put your hands behind and don't make any move or I will be forced to shoot you.

**Elias:** (*Caught off-guard.*) Okay!

**Chuma:** (*Chuma handcuffs him and turns him around.*) You are required to remain silent for anything you say could be used against you.

**Elias:** Can someone explain to me what is going on?

**Chuma:** (*Gagging him with a masking tape.*) Shut up! This is no time for explanation. You are guilty until proven otherwise. (*Elias is pushed in to a room and locked up.*)

**Mtawala:** (*Staring in disbelief.*) What next?

**Chuma:** Compose yourself and go to the hall.

**Mtawala:** What! You must be out of your mind if you expect me to make that speech.

**Chuma:** This time it is a different speech. Tell everyone to gather in the main field because the President is on his way here to grace the occasion and we can't all fit in the hall. My officers will ensure everyone is out in time and gathered in one place. All exits will be guarded from now on. Leave everything else to me. (*Whispering.*) These boys will go join the others but they will be watched. We don't want anyone to suspect anything is amiss. As for Elias I am sending an officer to watch over him. Remain calm but just say very few words. You may go now. (*Addressing Taabu and Rafiq.*) Go out there and pretend nothing happened. I will take you to the station with the others but I promise to protect you. I don't want anyone suspecting you. Thank you so much.

**Rafiq:** One more thing the balloons floating in the hall have explosives in them. (*Taabu and Rafiq walk out.*)

*(Chuma is giving orders and things are working out well.)*

**Chuma:** Make sure you are settled before the president arrives. *(Everyone is rushing to the field and Chuma is seen looking at his watch every now and then.)*

**Mtawala:** Everybody is out of the way now.

**Chuma:** What we need now is to confirm what the boys said. We have less than fifteen minutes on our side. *(Both hurry to the hall.)*

**Mtawala:** It is true Chuma the cylinders at the corners are not normally here.

**Chuma:** So then it is true and they said that even the balloons floating in the air have explosives. We have no time to remove everything but we are going to let the bombs explode inside the hall.

**Mtawala:** That reminds me this hall has a sliding roof and we just need to press the button and the explosives will just go boom! in to the air.

**Chuma:** Let's press it and walk away we have three minutes to go.

*(Mtawala presses the button and the roof starts sliding slowly as if counting the minutes.)*

**Chuma:** *(Addressing the gathering.)* Can you turn your eyes towards the hall we are about to throw fireworks in the air to welcome the President. *(Looking at his watch.)* You can start counting. Ensure that nobody moves.

**The Students:** *(Excited beyond words.)* One! Two! Threeeee!

*(The balloons start bursting in the air throwing different colors in to the atmosphere.)*

**The Students:** *(Loudly.)* Oooh that's lovely. Ooooooh! Lovely! Lovely!

*(Everyone is excited about the explosions that are coming in quick succession. It looks so colourful, one would think Diwali was around the corner. Finally the explosions die down. Students can be seen giving each other high fives.)*

**Chuma:** *(Beckons a white bus that is packed a short distance away.)* Order please! Those students who came here by this bus may you rise and get in to your school bus now. Don't try anything foolish because the police have a shoot to kill order. *(The students who are sitted together rise slowly and move towards the bus. As they enter the bus they are handcuffed. The crowd is thrown in to confusion.)* Can I have the principals gather together at the corner?

*(The principals rise and walk towards Chuma.)*

**Chuma:** You must get your students out of here now.



**Principals:** Why?

**Chuma:** This is no time for questions just do as I say. What you saw there, was no fireworks it was a bomb planned to kill all of us here. The details will come later. Remember we must be calm. The Principal of this school and I have done everything possible to avoid any casualties. A stampede is the last thing we want here. If I call out the name of your school pick your students and go.

*(Buses are seen speeding out of the school compound and curious onlookers are all over peeping through the fence. Journalists from all the media houses are streaming in. The Principal of Red Hill Academy has gathered his students to dismiss them.)*

**Mtawala:** *(Wiping his brow.)* You are kindly requested to go home the school has been closed indefinitely. Make sure you study even at home. I am saddened by the turn of events because one of our teachers is involved in an attempted bombing on our school.

**The Students:** *(Shouting.)* Who? Who?

**Mtawala:** *(Turns and sees Elias being brought out.)* Him! Our beloved teacher Elias. *(Tears well in his eyes.)*

**The Students:** *(Surge towards Elias.)* Stone him! Stone him!

**Mtawala:** *(Pleading.)* You can't do this! Don't make your hands dirty the long arm of the law will deal with him.

**Chuma:** You may go now. *(Students exit and Chuma poses for a photo next to Elias who is still in handcuffs. Microphones are all around him. Chuma avoids answering any questions from curious journalists.)* Come on Elias you are going in for a long time. Imara is already tired waiting for company.

The end.

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