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PRODUCTIONS

PRESENTS

An original screenplay

by

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"PROLOGUE"

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"EPILOGUE"

FADE IN:

INT. BATHROOM - HOTEL - DAY

A young woman, YASMIN, early 20's, lies face-down, battered and bruised on the floor. The bathtub beside her is almost filled with water that GUSHES out of the faucet. She lies there, half-alive.

The door is open, exposing an even larger --

HOTEL ROOM

The fancy carpet and other hotel essentials are covered in a clear PLASTIC SHEET that's stained with blood. The TV is on, loud, drowning out the CRIES of pain in the room.

DJ, a young man in his mid-20's, sits tied to a chair in the center of the room wearing only a pair of shorts. His well-toned body is on full display, covered with deep CUTS and BRUISES that bleed onto the sheet below him.

THE ALGERIAN, a large man with a KNIFE in hand, stands over him. He's tall, 40's, and unassuming but with cold, dead eyes. He wears an APRON like a butcher. And like a butcher, the apron is blood-stained.

He steps back from DJ and places the knife on a table with the rest of his "TOOLS". They are all instruments of torture ranging from small knives to an ELECTRICAL SAW.

This is a torture room...

The Algerian then walks over to the --

BATHROOM

The Algerian turns off the faucet. He lifts Yasmin off the floor by her hair and DUNKS her head into the bathtub. She struggles for breath.

The large man then lifts her head up and she lets out a huge GASP for air and coughs. Still holding her hair, he leads her out into the --

HOTEL ROOM

He places her in another chair in front of DJ. The Algerian's demeanor never changes throughout. He's cool, calm, and collected.

DJ looks at Yasmin. Her eyes and lips are bruised and swollen from an obvious beating. But he's no Adonis either; He looks like a lamb ready for slaughter.

The Algerian picks up the TV REMOTE, flips the channel to something he likes, and RAISES the volume.

He covers Yasmin's mouth with TAPE and picks up his KNIFE.

THE ALGERIAN

Please forgive me, but my English is not so good... I see the world as a cynical, callous place with no redeeming quality whatsoever. Like Sodom and Gomorrah. I tell you this so you know I have no better nature to appeal to, so please do not try.

He starts walking around the couple as he goes on.

THE ALGERIAN (CONT'D)

Do you like movies? I do. It is my hobby. I particularly like Indian movies. They are my favorite. Anyway, like any good movie, there are three parts: beginning, middle, end -- Act One, Two, and Three. In Act One we get to meet the main stars of the movie and discover the problem they face. In Act Two, the story moves ahead and yet there is a problem. It must be solved. But how? Finally, we have the Third Act. Now, this is the most important part of the movie because we get to see how the problem is solved. Everybody gets what they deserve -- boy gets girl, bad guy gets killed. The end.

He circles back to stand behind Yasmin. All the while, the couple have been staring at each other, doleful.

THE ALGERIAN (CONT'D)

Now, we are on to the second act. There is a problem we need to solve. How, is up to you.

He bends forward and RIPS OPEN Yasmin's blouse, buttons fly everywhere, exposing her shoulders and bra. DJ looks defeated and struggles to raise his head. He manages to form words beyond the extreme pain he's in.

DJ

I -- I don't understand... What do you want?!

THE ALGERIAN

Where is the ledger?

DJ

I can't... I can't help you. Please, let us go and --

Before DJ can finish his sentence, the Algerian CUTS Yasmin across her left SHOULDER. She screams under her taped mouth.

DJ (CONT'D)

No, stop! Stop! Please, tell me -- tell me what you want! Tell ME! She doesn't know anything!

THE ALGERIAN

(in French)

My god, you are stupid.

(in English)

Every time you give me the wrong answer, I'll cut her. I'll cut her so she's disfigured. She will be of no use to you then, eh?

(pause)

Where is the ledger?

DJ

Ledger?! What ledger? I don't know anything about a ledger!

The Algerian cuts Yasmin across her CHEST. She screams and struggles to get loose but the large man grabs her by her hair, stabilizing her. DJ can't help but watch and plead.

DJ (CONT'D)

Listen, I want to help you... I really do, but what you're asking for is impossible! I can't give you what I don't have!

The Algerian just stares at DJ.

THE ALGERIAN

Where's the ledger, *mon ami*?

DJ

Please...

The Algerian grabs Yasmin's head to face him and cuts across her FACE from her left temple down to her cheek. DJ yells and struggles but he can't break free to help her.

DJ (CONT'D)

I'll kill you! I'll kill you, you
bastard!

Yasmin is in excruciating pain and her eyes show it. Tears and blood flow freely down her scarred face...

DJ shuts his eyes.

DJ (V.O.)

Sometimes I see myself walking on a
beach. It's a wonderful day.
There's a woman coming to meet me.
She's beautiful, and she has a
child with her. My child. I feel
proud and happy to see my family --
but it's all just a dream. And I
soon have to wake up.

FADE TO:

LOVESTRUCK

Chapter One:

“WORTH DYING FOR.”

FADE IN:

EXT. KADUNA CITY - DAY

The hustle and bustle SOUNDS of the busy KADUNA metropolis state capital: CAR HORNS, STREET HAWKERS, and loud VOICES.

INT. ALHAJI UMAR'S OFFICE - DAY

It's a large office decked out in the best furniture money can buy. Two men sit across the table from each other. ALHAJI GALADIMA, late 50's, is on one end. On the other end is ALHAJI AHMADU UMAR.

Both men are oblivious to the news reports on the flat-screen TV on the wall.

INSERT TV: NEWS REPORT about widespread corruption in the country and the measures being taken to deal with the problem. A SPOKESPERSON for the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) addresses a packed conference room about the anti-graft agency's commitment to rooting out the cause of corruption in the country and those who perpetrate it.

ALHAJI UMAR'S HAND points the remote and the volume fades to silence. He speaks OFF SCREEN, unseen, like *The Godfather*, sounding like a cross between a gangster and a king.

ALHAJI UMAR (O.S.)

I love money. Let me say that again... I love money. If someone was to tell me today that loving money was wrong, then I don't want to be right.

Both men laugh.

ALHAJI UMAR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Yes. But you know what I love more than money? Making more money. Which is why you are here.

ALHAJI GALADIMA

(sits up straight)

You come highly recommended within... certain circles. Speaking frankly, I need your help.

ALHAJI UMAR (O.S.)

Indeed you do. Let me tell you something, the economic meltdown brought the Western nations to their knees. You know why? Because they lost their focus. They forgot they were capitalists and stopped making money. They forgot their greed.

ALHAJI GALADIMA

You're saying... greed is good for our country?

ALHAJI UMAR (O.S.)

I'm saying it's a jungle out there and we all better decide if we are the hunters or the prey. In this country, we have a very capitalist agenda. We need to make money by all means necessary. It is our driving force. Once you stop being the hunter, you become the prey.

Babagana sits back, taking it all in.

ALHAJI GALADIMA

What can you do for me?

ALHAJI UMAR (O.S.)

Your request is fairly simple. Your money is deposited in my bank under non-existent companies -- four should do -- and abracadabra! Thirty million naira clean as a whistle. I take a modest fifteen percent fee.

Babagana lights up with a smile. He stands, reaches over, and shakes Alhaji Umar's hand.

ALHAJI GALADIMA

Thank you. Thank you very much. I knew I could count on your expertise.

We get to see the man for the first time. Alhaji Umar - early 60's, rich, and he wants you to know it. He adjusts his reading glasses to rest on his nose.

ALHAJI UMAR

I'll have my personal assistant help you with the final details. Now, the money...

Babagana reaches down and picks up a BRIEFCASE by his chair. He opens it to reveal neatly stacked NAIRA NOTES. He closes the briefcase and smiles. He presses the INTERCOM and the office door opens.

In walks VICTOR, Alhaji Umar's Personal Assistant. He's a young man dressed sharply in a suit and bow-tie, carrying some file folders. He appears very studious and takes his job seriously.

ALHAJI UMAR (CONT'D)

Victor, please, see to it that our newest client is taken care of.

Victor nods and leads Babagana out of the office. Alhaji Umar produces a small black book from his pocket, a LEDGER. He places it on the desk and writes something in it.

Victor returns, closing the door behind him.

ALHAJI UMAR (CONT'D)

Victor, make sure Alhaji Galadima's money goes through the usual channels. I don't want any mistakes.

VICTOR

Yes, sir.

Alhaji Umar finishes writing in the ledger, stands, and unlocks a secret SAFE next to his desk. He places the ledger in it, locking it when he's done.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

(opening a folder)

You have a meeting with the chairman of Global Exports at noon.

(pause)

And the handymen are here.

ALHAJI UMAR

Yes, send them in.

VICTOR

Sani is also waiting to see you.

Alhaji frowns.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Two men sit waiting by the P.A.'s desk. The older man is ROBERT AKMAN, aka "UNCLE BOB", late 50's and small in stature. He's been working all his life and it shows.

Next to him is DENNIS AKMAN JR. aka "DJ". He's a young man with a face full of potential. Both men are dressed casually in their knock-around clothes.

Another man waits in the outer office. SANI UMAR, late 20's, paces the room with his arms folded. He is very nervous, hiding behind his sunglasses, in a world of his own.

The door opens and the visitors stand. Victor comes out. Sani steps forward but Victor raises his hand to STOP! He steps back while Victor approaches the pair.

VICTOR

Alhaji Umar is a very busy man so we'll keep this brief. Now, don't speak unless spoken to and don't sit unless instructed to. Also, don't look at Alhaji directly in the eyes. It's disrespectful.

(pause)

Wipe your shoes before you enter.

They do as they are told while Victor leads the way into the--

INNER OFFICE

Both men stand slightly bowed to Alhaji Umar.

ALHAJI UMAR

Ah, Bob. How are you doing? How's the family?

UNCLE BOB

Fine, sir. All is well. Thank God.

ALHAJI UMAR

And that your daughter, she never mature yet?

Uncle Bob finds the question unnerving but laughs it off.

ALHAJI UMAR (CONT'D)

Bob, I have a guesthouse that needs some work done. General maintenance of the walls and floors, some painting and plumbing. Can you handle it?

UNCLE BOB

Yes, sir. No problem at all. We can handle anything.

Victor immediately produces a piece of paper from his suit pocket and hands it to Uncle Bob.

VICTOR

This is the address. The security guard will let you in.

UNCLE BOB

Thank you, sir. We'll get to work right away.

Alhaji Umar finally notices DJ behind the older man. He has been admiring the grandeur of the office.

ALHAJI UMAR

(to Uncle Bob)

And who is this with you?

UNCLE BOB

My nephew. He's been helping me for some months now. He's very good at fixing things. He'll do a good job for you, sir.

Alhaji looks at DJ up and down.

ALHAJI UMAR

Young man, what's your name?

DJ

DJ -- Dennis, sir.

ALHAJI UMAR

(motions around the office)

I see you like nice things. Good. A man needs to have nice things in life. It makes one feel proud of what hard work can achieve.

(flashing his expensive watch)

Maybe one day you'll be able to buy yourself one of these. And much more.

DJ stares at the Alhaji for a moment, right in the eyes, and nods "yes." Victor, confident the meeting is over, ushers Uncle Bob and DJ to the door.

ALHAJI UMAR (CONT'D)

(in a serious tone)

Oh, one more thing...

They all stop and turn.

ALHAJI UMAR (CONT'D)

When you are there, see that you don't make too much noise. I have a guest staying at the house that doesn't like to be disturbed.

VICTOR

(to Uncle Bob and DJ)

You hear? Don't disturb Alhaji's guest while you're working.

Uncle Bob and DJ nod before leaving the room. Alhaji Umar gets up and motions for Victor to take the briefcase off the table, which he does.

ALHAJI UMAR

Now, tell my son to come in.

Immediately, Sani scurries into the office once Victor motions for him to enter.

SANI

(in Hausa)

Dad, I --

ALHAJI UMAR

(in Hausa, angrily)

Sit down and shut up!

Victor shuts the door.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Uncle Bob and DJ exit the main gate and head down the street. Parked some ways away is a BLACK sedan with the dark silhouette of a MAN behind the wheel. He wears a BLACK SUIT and RED TIE and seems to be watching the office building.

EXT. THE GUESTHOUSE - DAY

Uncle Bob's old PICK-UP TRUCK grinds to a halt outside a very posh but quiet neighborhood. He and DJ exit the vehicle and look at the guesthouse. It's a duplex in a small compound.

Uncle Bob knocks on the gate while DJ gets their tools from the back of the truck. The side-gate swings open and a slender Hausa man not much older than Uncle Bob reveals himself. He's the SECURITY GUARD.

He carries a MACHETE, while a BOW and QUIVER of ARROWS are slung around his shoulder. He looks at the pair, frowning.

UNCLE BOB
 Good Morning. Alhaji sent us to fix
 the house.

INT. ALHAJI UMAR'S GUESTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Uncle Bob and DJ enter the compound. The Guard leads the way, explaining to Uncle Bob what needs fixing while DJ sets up the tools on the floor.

Out the corner of his eye, DJ catches a glimpse of something -
 - A CURTAIN closes in the TOP FLOOR window. Someone was watching him.

INT. ALHAJI UMAR'S GUESTHOUSE - DAY

Both men work tirelessly in the empty flat. A small RADIO helps break the monotony, pumping out lively tunes to get them through the work.

INT. GROUND FLOOR - ALHAJI UMAR'S GUESTHOUSE - EVENING

The handymen survey the flat, checking their progress. Both men are tired and sweaty. DJ takes off his shirt to fan himself.

UNCLE BOB
 We'll work upstairs tomorrow. God willing, we can finish in two days time. Let's pack up.

They start getting their things together when DJ suddenly remembers...

DJ
 I left the radio on upstairs...

He's moving before he even finishes the sentence, up the stairs, into the

TOP FLOOR

Where he spots the radio. The song playing is something he likes and he starts singing along and dancing to it. He really gets into it, when he notices SOMEONE standing across the hall. He stops and looks back.

It's a beautiful young woman, Alhaji's "GUEST". Her name is YASMIN DOULI. Their eyes meet and the moment seems to last an eternity.

Yasmin is an exotic beauty, tall and slender with flowing long dark hair and hazel eyes that seem to look through you. She sports a jeweled NOSE-RING and HENNA design on her hands and feet.

She's dressed in a transparent white GOWN and a SHAWL, which she quickly uses to conceal her face. She was staring at his fine physique. DJ in turn is transfixed, like he just saw an angel.

UNCLE BOB (O.S.)
DJ? Are you coming?

The spell is broken and both turn away. Yasmin retreats into the room, locking the door behind her. DJ grabs the radio, turns it off, and runs out the room.

INT. UNCLE BOB'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

The truck pulls into the small compound with a squalid three-room BUNGALOW. The place is very low-income. Uncle Bob's wife ADORA, and his 11 year-old daughter AMELIA come out to welcome him home. DJ greets them before entering his room.

INT. DJ'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is spare but it is home. DJ lies shirtless on his mattress, listening to his radio and staring at the ceiling. A standing fan weaves back and forth while he aids the cooling process with a cold BEER that rests on his stomach.

It's late. He finishes his beer, turns off the radio, and goes to sleep.

INT. TOP FLOOR - ALHAJI UMAR'S GUESTHOUSE - DAY

DJ, in a T-shirt and jeans, works a long roller-brush across the ceiling. His radio blares out a tune. He's so into the work he doesn't notice Yasmin standing behind him.

She taps him on his paint-stained shoulder and he spins around, surprised. DJ drops the roller-brush, turns off the radio, and stands facing Yasmin, nervously.

She's dressed modestly in a gown and her hair is tied in a pony-tail. She's carrying a tray with two plastic bottles of WATER on it and tries not to look him directly in the eyes. There's a long pause between them.

DJ
(stammers)
Sorry, madam. Was the music too loud? Was it too loud? I can turn it off if you --

YASMIN
No. No, it wasn't loud.

DJ
Because I didn't want to disturb you...

YASMIN
No, it's fine. I like listening to music myself...
(looking directly at him)
Sometimes I even like dancing.

DJ shies away, embarrassed. Yasmin smiles.

YASMIN (CONT'D)
I've seen worse.

They both smile and return to the awkward silence. The tray begins to shake slightly in her hands.

YASMIN (CONT'D)
My name is Yasmin.

DJ
I'm Dennis -- DJ.

YASMIN
(to herself)
DJ.
(pause)
DJ, I was wondering if you and your friend were thirsty. I brought you some cold bottled water.

DJ immediately removes his gloves and accepts the bottles from her.

DJ
Thank you, madam.

YASMIN
(smiles)
You're welcome. And it's just "Yasmin."

She starts to walk slowly around the room, admiring the work. Meanwhile DJ can't take his eyes off her. She moves like she's royalty, poised and elegant.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

You work fast. I admire people who can fix things. It means you're a good problem-solver.

(pause)

You think you'll be finished soon?

DJ

Maybe by tomorrow.

YASMIN

Oh. Then it's on to something else?

DJ

Unless Alhaji finds something else for us to do, then yes.

Her demeanor changes and she appears apprehensive.

YASMIN

You met him? You met Alhaji?

DJ

Yes. Yesterday morning at his office.

She shudders a bit when she speaks of Alhaji.

YASMIN

(pensively)

He's not my husband, you know. Not even my boyfriend, or sugar-daddy. I belong to him.

DJ doesn't know how to respond. Yasmin walks towards him.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

I've known Alhaji since I was a little girl. You could even say that he raised me.

(pause)

He says he loves me.

DJ wants to say something but can't...

YASMIN (CONT'D)

But his love has rules. I am constantly watched.

(MORE)

YASMIN (CONT'D)

He comes and goes as he pleases,
but I remain here. I haven't left
this house in years!

She's practically leaning on him now...

YASMIN (CONT'D)

I don't know why I'm telling you
all this, but somehow I sense you
know how I feel.

DJ holds Yasmin in his arms...

DJ

Yasmin -- Madam, I don't know what
you --

YASMIN

(desperately)
It's in your eyes, too -- that
feeling. Tell me... tell me!

DJ

(to himself)
Trapped. You feel trapped.

YASMIN

Yes --

They are face to face, staring deeply into each other's eyes,
exposed and vulnerable. A KISS is imminent. They are about to
when --

UNCLE BOB'S VOICE cuts through the silence in PIDGIN...

UNCLE BOB (O.S.)

DJ! Ahh, my back don break o!

The older man is heard coming up the stairs and the couple
withdraw from one another, composing themselves.

UNCLE BOB (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*DJ! Where you dey? My back don
break --*

DJ also responds in Pidgin...

DJ

I dey here.

Uncle Bob slowly enters the room with one hand rubbing his
back. He sees DJ and Yasmin standing close together. He's
about to say something when DJ cuts in.

DJ (CONT'D)

Uncle Bob, this is Madam Yasmin, Alhaji's guest. She brought us some water.

UNCLE BOB

Ah, madam, good morning. I hope my nephew didn't disturb you, eh?

YASMIN

No, no. Nothing like that. I'm actually happy with what you've done so far.

DJ hands Uncle Bob one of the bottles.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

But what happened to your back?

UNCLE BOB

Ahh... madam, I don't pull muscle for my back. The pain is too much!

DJ helps get him to sit down.

YASMIN

I think I have some painkillers. Wait here...

Yasmin hurries down the hall to her room. DJ watches her go. Uncle Bob grabs his arm.

UNCLE BOB

(whispering)
Wetin dey wrong with you, eh? You want to lose your job?

DJ

She started talking to me and I didn't want to be rude.

UNCLE BOB

Rude? You think say she care? Her business and your business no be the same. Make you just leave am, eh?

DJ hangs his head in silence. Meanwhile, Yasmin returns with a medicine PACKET and hands it to Uncle Bob. He takes the pills with some water.

YASMIN

I think you should try to take it easy. No need to make your back worse.

DJ and Uncle Bob mull over the situation.

DJ

Madam is right. I can finish up the rest of the work while you rest.

UNCLE BOB

(to Yasmin)

Madam, there's plenty work... I can do it. I've been working since I was seven years old.

YASMIN

I insist. Your health is more important.

Uncle Bob looks at DJ and then at Yasmin and sighs. He nods, reluctantly.

EXT. ALHAJI UMAR'S GUESTHOUSE - EVENING

DJ helps Uncle Bob out of the gate while Yasmin stops at the front door. DJ looks back at her. Their eyes meet again and it's the same as before -- spellbound.

INT. DJ'S ROOM - NIGHT

DJ tosses and turns in the dark. He can't sleep. Frustrated, he turns to stare at the ceiling. There's only one thing on his mind -- Yasmin. All along, he can hear the loud THUMPING of his HEARTBEAT.

MATCH CUT:

INT. GROUND FLOOR - ALHAJI UMAR'S GUESTHOUSE - DAY

The SOUND of the heartbeat gets slightly FASTER and LOUDER. DJ wipes the sweat off his brow. He can't seem to concentrate on his work and constantly looks up at the stairs. Finally, he decides to make a move and starts up the stairs to the

TOP FLOOR

He makes his way straight to the door at the end. He knocks and immediately Yasmin opens, dressed in a see-through gown.