

Whispers of 1970: The Biafra Aftermath

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CHAPTER 1 - THE ASSIGNMENT

In a dimly lit office, bathed in the soft amber glow of filtered sunlight, a middle-aged man dressed in a military uniform commands attention from a chair positioned at the heart of the room. The uniform, impeccably tailored and adorned with insignias of honor, exudes an air of authority that seems woven into the fabric itself. It's as though every crease on his meticulously pressed pants and every sharp edge of his regalia speaks of his journey, etched in courage and dedication.

Between his lips rests a cigar, a symbol of moments stolen from the intensity of his responsibilities. With practiced ease, he draws from the cigar, each puff releasing tendrils of smoke that dance around his mustache. The wisps of smoke curl like secrets, adding an intriguing mystique to his demeanor. Yet, beneath the facade of confidence, there's a hint of vulnerability that clings to him like a shroud. Beads of sweat clasp to his furrowed brow, portraying tension that simmers just beneath the surface.

His stern expression, etched by the burdens he carries, sets a silent scene of apprehension. Fingers, tense and twitching with a restless energy, rhythmically tap against the armrest of his chair as he traverses the perplexity of his thoughts. The cigar, a companion in moments of contemplation, inches ever closer to its end. With a practiced grace, he delicately places it in an ashtray, the glowing ember extinguishing reluctantly as if it too hesitates to part ways with his company. His gaze, once lost in the spiral of smoke, flicks towards the wall clock, an emblem of measured time. Confusion knits his brows together, a fleeting emotion that hints at the complexity of his responsibilities.

Just then, the atmosphere shifts with the entry of his Superintendent. The air seems to crackle with a palpable energy, the rank, and respect commanded by this presence evident in the way the room itself seems to stand at attention. The man in uniform, jolted from his introspection, hastens to extinguish the cigar, a touch of urgency mingled with a hint of clumsiness, a reminder of the delicate balance he maintains between his personal indulgences and his solemn duty.

As he rises to salute, a momentary lightheadedness washes over him, a visceral reminder of the gravity of his role. A silent exchange of nods communicates a world of understanding—a passing of the torch, if only for a moment. This nod is a microcosm of their dynamic, a dance of respect that knows no words. Yet, amidst these rituals of hierarchy, there is an undercurrent—an unusual sense of pity that resides within the depths of the man's gaze. It's not the pity that comforts, but the kind that shares the weight of burdens, an empathetic bridge between two lives intertwined by circumstance.

He places the file — his companion in this private drama — upon the desk with a measured deliberation. Each corner of the file seems to hold a fragment of his story, a story etched onto paper that few will ever read. As he exits the room, the lingering weight of his presence transforms the office into a silent witness of moments that transcend the ordinary. His focus narrows, honing in on the file's cover. The word "Biafra" stands as a testament to the complex journey that lies ahead. The man sinks back into his chair, the leather cushioning him against the weight of his choices, his grip on the file a poignant manifestation of the inner turmoil he grapples with—an emblem of duty warring against conscience, and a single thread in the rich tapestry of his life.

CHAPTER 2 - THE AIRPORT

In the sprawling expanse of the airport, a symphony of movement and voices unfolds. Amidst this orchestrated chaos, the uniformed man stands as a solitary note, patient and unwavering, within a line that snakes like a thread connecting moments and destinations. His stance is one of poised readiness, a reflection of the discipline that courses through his veins. The world around him seems to blur as he occupies this transient space, his thoughts a mixture of the immediate and the looming.

The moment captures his gaze, drawn like a magnet to a small local plane stationed nearby. The aircraft stands as a visual reminder of the journey that beckons, its unassuming size casting an imposing shadow over his emotions. Apprehension and curiosity engage in a gambol within his eyes, each vying for dominance, creating an assortment of emotions that resonates with anyone who has faced the precipice of the unknown. Now, the moment narrows a focus, mindful of the briefcase nestled in his grasp. The leather exterior, polished yet shabby, speaks of journeys taken and secrets guarded. But it's the label, that simple word "Biafra," that adds an electrifying layer of intrigue. The uniform man is left to wonder—what lies within those sturdy walls? What secrets, what truths, what burdens does it carry? The contents remain elusive, a puzzle piece waiting to fall into place.

With each step forward in the line, the air thickens with a sense of disquiet. It's as though the world itself holds its breath, sensing that a delicate balance is about to shift. Shadows lengthen, and the ticking of unseen clocks becomes a metronome for the tension that weaves its way into the narrative. Every movement, every shuffle of feet, takes on a heightened significance—a silent prelude to the unfolding events that lie just beyond the horizon.

CHAPTER 3 - THE TRIP

The transition from airport bustle to cabin tranquility is a seamless journey of its own. Within the belly of the airplane, time seems to stretch and contract, a dimension separate from the world left behind. As passengers take their seats and fasten their seatbelts, the atmosphere hums with a sense of anticipation, a collective agreement to surrender to the sky's embrace.

The airplane captures the symphony of movement as flight attendants glide down the narrow aisle, a choreography of safety demonstrations and polite smiles. But for the uniformed man, the pulse of his attention is reserved for the spectacle beyond the window. The world outside transforms into a mesmerizing panorama—a tapestry of clouds that stretch like an infinite canvas. He gazes in awe at the sheer expanse, at the soft contours and shadowy depths that dance in tandem with the plane's trajectory. In those fleeting moments, he's a passenger not only of the aircraft but of the sky itself, a witness to nature's silent dance.

As the plane hurtles forward, the man's thoughts too seem to soar, unburdened by the realities that await on solid ground. The world below becomes a distant abstraction, while the clouds become companions of solitude, sharing in the weight of his thoughts, his hopes, and his hesitations. A subtle smile tugs at the corners of his lips—a quiet acknowledgment of the temporary escape that flight grants him.

But as the sun begins its descent towards the horizon, a different transformation takes place. The golden hues that bathed the sky give way to the velvety embrace of twilight. The transition is a dance of colors, a farewell to the day, and an embrace of the night. With each passing minute, the sky deepens into shades of indigo and burgundy, and the uniformed man finds himself drawn back from his reverie, a spectator to the gradual fading of brilliance.

As darkness unfurls its cloak across the firmament, the transition from day to night mirrors the journey of the uniformed man himself. The awe that once filled his eyes now gives way to the contemplation of shadows—the juxtaposition of light and dark that mirrors the intricacies of his own existence. The clouds, once vibrant and vivid, now take on an eerie allure, a reminder that even the most beautiful things can evolve and come to an end in the blink of an eye.

As the plane begins its descent, reality crashes into his consciousness with an unexpected jolt. He's pulled from his reverie, and the symphony of fellow passengers echoes around him. Inquiring glances meet his disoriented state, a reflection of their own shared experience—a return to the confines of the human world after a momentary dalliance with the heavens. His once-promising night, filled with dreams of discovery and possibilities, now stands at the precipice of unexpected challenges. The descent of the plane, both literal and metaphorical, foreshadows the tempestuous path that lies ahead — a journey of awakening, navigating the unknown, and facing the consequences of his decisions.

CHAPTER 4 - THE ARRIVAL

Stepping into the realm of immigration, the uniformed man becomes the focus of scrutiny. His appearance, marked by Fulani tribal patterns, sparks a hint of irritation among the officials. The officer assigned to his case employs an array of unconventional questions, deliberately unsettling his composure. The uniformed man navigates through the barrage of inquiries, his internal struggle apparent in the furrowed lines on his cheeks and the tension in his posture. As he grapples with unfamiliar territory, he moves through the airport with heightened vigilance, a stranger in a foreign land.

Emerging from the terminal, the officer stands at the curbside, attempting to hail a taxi. His gestures are frantic, almost desperate, as he competes for the attention of passing drivers. Finally, he captures the distracted gaze of a taxi driver, a moment of triumph amidst his mounting frustrations.

Seated aback in the taxi, the officer points at the map, designating "Ohafia Barracks" as his destination. The driver studies the map, casting an occasional glance at the officer. Unspoken intentions simmer beneath the surface, lending an air of tension to the journey. As the car navigates the winding roads, the officer's attention oscillates between the terrain and the driver, the apposition of the new environment, and his lingering wariness. Gradually, the novelty gives way to fatigue, and he finds himself lulled into a cautious silence, the rhythm of the journey soothing him into an uneasy slumber.

CHAPTER 5 - THE RUDE AWAKENING

In the womb of the car, enveloped by the rhythmic hum of the engine and the muted glow of streetlights, the officer is lost in fitful slumber. Dreams, unbidden and surreal, whisper in the corners of his mind. Abruptly, a dissonance of distant clamor crescendos, a discordant coherence that rips him from his restless sleep. His heart pounds in tandem with the uproar outside, a primal rhythm that mirrors the chaos beyond the confines of the vehicle.

Startled, he jerks upright in his seat, disoriented and wide-eyed. The car comes to a sudden, jarring halt, the abrupt cessation of motion further heightening his confusion. The driver's voice, a harsh command tinged with urgency, slices through the whirlpool. The words hang in the air, each syllable laced with a palpable tension that seems to constrict around him.

The door swings open, a portal to an unknown realm, and the officer is propelled from the car's sanctuary into the heart of the commotion. His limbs are unsteady, his balance a fragile illusion in the midst of chaos. Bewildered and caught in the currents of a reality he can't grasp, he stumbles out onto the pavement, his hand clutching the briefcase as if it were a lifeline in the storm.

The transition from cocooned comfort to the raw, unforgiving night air is a visceral shock, one that jolts his senses awake. His heart races, matching the frenzied pulse of the scene before him. A briefcase that had once felt like a symbol of control now seems insignificant, slipping from his grasp as if eager to distance itself from the unfolding madness.

The brief struggle, a twirl of desperation and detachment, mirrors the internal battle he wages—a clash of identity and circumstance that culminates in a cruel twist of fate. The briefcase crashes to the ground, its metallic thud a sinister punctuation mark amid the chaos. And yet, even as the contents spill out in a silent cascade, the world around him doesn't pause. Concerned bystanders converge, their faces etched with curiosity and empathy. Their hands reach out, forming a bridge between his confusion and their collective desire to help. It's a parade of humanity in turmoil, a reminder that even in the face of chaos, connection endures.

But amid the gestures of compassion, whispers slither through the air like serpents—insidious and intoxicating. Murmurs catch fire and spread like a virus, fueled by a market woman's piercing scream—a banshee's cry that shatters the night's fragile balance.

(In pidgin English)

“Na him! (It is him)

Na dem Dey do do, kill our papa, kill our pikin (one of the people responsible for killing our fathers and children).”

The words, in a language both familiar and foreign, find resonance within the officer's awareness. They declare him an agent of darkness, a player in the tragedies that haunt their memories. In an instant, he becomes a living embodiment of their collective pain, a vessel onto which they project their grief, their rage, and their thirst for vengeance.

A crescendo of echoes, a consonance of accusations, swells like a storm, casting an invisible net that encircles him. The gathering of people, an assembly that transcends the physical, becomes a living entity—a hydra with countless heads, each bearing witness to a different facet of his alleged crimes. Tension weaves a web of apprehension, its threads drawn taut with the weight of decade-old wounds. As the throng grows, so does the suffocating aura of judgment, an atmosphere that pulsates with a malevolent energy.

And in the heart of this maelstrom, the officer stands—a solitary figure in a sea of faces, an unwilling protagonist in a narrative of retribution. The night's tendrils wrap around him, and he becomes a captive, both of the crowd's fervor and his own haunted past. The collision of his reality with theirs is a collision of worlds, a convergence of destinies fueled by darkness and guided by a wicked force that knows no mercy.

CHAPTER 6 - THE EXECUTION

The night air is heavy with an unsettling mix of scents. The pungent tang of kerosine and the earthy waft of pine intermingle, crafting a blend that's impossible to disregard. This aroma hangs like a suffocating cloud, a potent reminder of impending trouble lurking in the shadows.

As the night extends its dark embrace, figures emerge from the obscurity, their countenances and attire bearing evident marks of violence. Sledgehammers and machetes, instruments of devastation, glimmer ominously in their grips. These are no mere wanderers; their determined strides are etched with a resolute purpose.

A charred building stands as a grim testament in the backdrop—twisted metal and smoldering ruins a poignant reminder of rampant chaos. From this ruin, the figures materialize almost as specters—phantasmal forms against the canvas of destruction. Their movements are deliberate, akin to steps in a somber ritual—a dance of retribution.

Leaving behind the smoldering remnants, they press on, a trail of acrid smoke trailing in their wake. The air is thick with the scathing scent—a stark reminder of what has been irrevocably lost. It's as if the very essence of the night holds its breath, sensing that the chronicle of darkness is far from its culmination. Among these haunting figures, the officer's remains are concealed within the folds of the night, a cruel secret destined to never be unraveled.