



The
**CIVIL
WAR**

(Season 1)

OHANADO UCHE ERUDITE

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BY OHANADO UCHE ERUDITE

EPISODE 1 - THE AMBUSH

Gunshots and echoed screams filled the air. The sound of blood spills and battle cries were all I could hear. It was an unanticipated strike, it wasn't even supposed to be a strike at all, we were ambushed or rather backstabbed by our enemies who proposed a truce. I guess this war would last a little longer than we thought.

This was supposed to be an agreement for a truce, we have been betrayed, we shouldn't have trusted the Hausa's. These and many more were the thoughts running through my mind.

"Dike! Dike!!"

"We have to move now" Agu bellowed as he incessantly pointed to our getaway drive, a black 260hp SUV which has suffered from lack of maintenance due to the war.

"Alpha Tango 1 do you copy" he angrily screamed at the walkie talkie as we edged for our ride and likewise trying to keep our heads from bullets and ammunition flying around. The Hausa's had opened fire on us, they had no intentions to sue for peace. It is too late now, they outsmarted us this time.

We rushed in the car as lions on a prey and chanted the words "go go go" in unison as our getaway driver zoomed us out of the scene. Dike attacked the dashboard of the car with several smacks showing his frustration as the walkie talkie gave back only static.

I was mute, cold shivers running down my spine as I replayed the events all over again in my mind, tear drops form In my eyes as the horror of a bullet in the head of my childhood friend Kesse was replaced by sadness. *'Arrghh! They killed my friend out there'* I sobbed as the tears now freely rolled down my cheeks.

"E no go beta for those people"

"God go punish them". Dike cursed

I guess this is one of the many attributes of war. A lot of people die, even those dear to our hearts. My mind wandered with thoughts of doubts and regrets

"What's there to fight for if no one is left to care for, is this really worth it". These thoughts continued ruminating in my mind. I haven't witnessed a war before, although I have a very clear impression of what a war looks like, but now I was starting to know what it felt like.

The war which started out as mere protest for independence by the Igbos wavered off by the Hausa's had grown into a full blown civil war and we got caught up in the middle. I was a military officer, not a combatant which could be easily predicted by my rather flat chest and unappealing attempt at masculinity, but i was an intelligence analyst who was deployed few years ago to serve at the central intelligence agency (CIA) Enugu division. I hadn't stayed few months before the war had started.

Now it's been three years since the war started and just today we had a slightest glimmer of hope that we had reached a stopping point only to robbed of illusion by these blood-thirsty and empty-headed Hausa's.

The rough jerk forward due to the abrupt halt by the driver snapped me out of my thoughts. Wiping my moist eyes with one hand I opened the door with the other and made my way out of the car.

'Pheww' I sighed in relief

'We made it to the base', Udemba said, he was the driver, a tall and lanky fellow, his appearance betrayed his strength and dexterity. He was the third of the five-man Alpha Tango Squad that survived the ambush, the other two being I and Dike, a tall, dark, huge guy with a face that was as rough as a newly tarred road. He was our leader and the bravest of us all.

"Those bastards, they couldn't even settle for a fair fight" were Uche's first remarks after Agu narrated the incident we faced back at the Unity Square, the place which we were supposedly hinted to use as the meeting ground. Uche was the leader of the (FRS), the FAST RESPONSE SQUAD. It was established few months after the war started by the CIA Enugu division. It had many departments, the topmost being the Alpha Tango squad which was severed earlier today. Uche was a young man in his early 40s, he had a handsome build and a smile that made you momentarily forget that all was not well. He was a very smart and strategic man, all the more reason why he most of all was devastated by this happening.

"I am deeply sorry for what happened today, go home to your families, I will come up with a plan, even if it means we all are going to die for this war to be won" he said as he motioned out of the briefing room fast paced and trying to hide the tear drops that were settling down at the base of his eyeballs.

Few minutes later I had packed my stuff and was on my way home.

I boarded a shuttle that dropped me at the nearest bustop to my house. I alighted and kept walking on the muddy road, which gave my black Chinos trousers dents as well as my brown brogue boots.

"Even if it means we are all going die for this war to be won" I reminisced Uche's closing remarks in my thoughts as I continued walking, trying to provide the best inference to this statement.

"Okpa di oku, Okpa di oku"

I was jolted out of my thoughts by the voice of three women chanting repeatedly, I turned towards them, and as if they could read words out of my face, they simultaneously opened their coolers and reached for their black water-proof nylons, getting ready to serve balls of *Okpa*, a native snack made from Bambara nut. I went for the one in the women in the middle, courtesy of my instincts.

"Give me Okpa #200" I said amidst exchanging pleasantries.

"Thank you ma" I answered as I collected my comestible and continued my journey home.

In less than jiffy I was home, or what I call home you would say. A two bedroom flat with a large front yard.

"Daddy Oyoyo, Daddy Oyoyo", my first son chorused with ecstasy the second he saw me. He ran towards me with a face beaming with happiness like that of someone who just met his idol, which I

happened to be. I carried him on my shoulder, smiling, he didn't weigh much he was only five years and a very smart and vibrant kid.

"What of your mummy"

"She is inside the kitchen"

We conversed as we made our way into the house. It's been a long day, and the one thing that keeps me going every day was my family, which was my wonder kid, and my beautiful and caring wife. My smile dimmed as I knew I had to tell today's tale to my wife and it dimmed a little more when I sensed that the days ahead might hold more terrible tales.

"Hey hun, how was your day" she asked with a smile on her face which vanished when she sensed my countenance

"Fine, it was fine, we thank God" I replied.

THE CIVIL WAR

EPISODE 2 - AWAY FROM HOME

It had been a long day and I was equally tired, I gave my son the nylon bag containing the *Okpa*, as it was a norm for parents to bring gifts for their children on returning home, he collected with joy and a resounding, Thank you.

"Honey, what really happened today?" my wife, Valery begged the question again.

"Babe, am tired please let me shower and eat, then we'll talk" I answered as I entered the bedroom which was right across the under-furnished sitting room. I undressed with ease, wrapped a towel around my loins and freshened up. My exit from the bathroom was greeted with the sweet aroma oozing from the kitchen.

My wife was a natural, her cooking and home keeping reminded me of my mother, may her gentle soul rest in peace. Valery helped even outside the home, she was very pivotal in the cognitive development of our son, Michael, and of course she wasn't lacking in the *other room*.

I changed into my pajamas and hurried back to the living room. There hadn't been power supply for a few months now, and the war made sure that almost every commodity was scarce, petrol inclusive. I on the other hand, leveraged the nature of my work and made provisions for power supply to my house. I turned on the TV and like someone searching for his soul mate I scoured through the UHF broadcasting until I found a station I preferred.

A young lady maybe in her mid30s was the anchor and she fluently went through the news headlines.

"*Can you imagine, what rubbish are they saying!?*" I shouted back to thin air as the anchor reported that the Igbos opened fire on the Hausas at the Unity square.

What could any of us do, it is quite evident that the mass media had more power and influence than squads or teams, because they had the power to reach so many people and either spread lies and rumors or speak truth.

"*Hun, here's your food*" Valerie said as she dropped an appetizing plate of my favorite delicacy, *beans and fried plantain*. Like a hungry lion I gobbled my food, nodding my head in appraisal of the wonderful craft she just presented.

"*Beep Beep Beep*" my phone rang

"*Junior, go and bring my phone for me*" I ordered. He did so hastily and my mood changed when I saw the caller was Uche.

"Hello Sir" I said

"*Dike, its code blue, you would be leaving on a risky assignment along with the squad, and this assignments will last for a few months, so say your farewells to your family and be ready by tomorrow*" he replied as he ended the call.

I turned to my wife and noticed she had been staring at me all the while.

"What is it again, this time" she asked.

"I would be leaving tomorrow, I don't know when I will be back" I replied lowering my head sorrowfully.

"How can you just decide to leave like that" she nagged

"What about our son, what about me" she continued, this time her voice breaking due to the tears she was holding back.

I couldn't say anything, she would still win if I tried to debate about it. I had lost my appetite, I left the food and started packing some of my stuff. I would be leaving my family behind, this wasn't an easy decision but it had to be made.

"What is this place?" I asked Agu with contempt and disgust written all over my face.

It appeared Uche had sent us to a hell hole on an undercover mission to take out the leader of the Hausa front. This task would be almost impossible to complete, but success meant that the war could be close to an end. We got to know from a source that a terrorist group fighting under disguise as the Hausa people was responsible for all this and that they had members even in the Igbo land. We were sent to also get answers.

"This is Corper's Ville, it's the safest place, the terrorists don't come here because of the corpers" Udemba replied removing his cigarette with one hand. He loved smoking while driving.

We were sent to Heart of the *Mogabi*, the home of the *yan ta'adda* as they are natively called. The Corper's Ville was just few kilometers away, so we had to assume new identities as corpers and find ways to bring down the terrorist group singlehandedly. We were given contacts on an insider who would help us achieve this task at hand and contacting him seemed like the only step in the right direction for now.

"Oh boy see Chenkens, this wan na die o" Udemba exclaimed as he marveled at the young and beautiful corpers with overwhelming backsides that graced our view as we entered the hostel and searched for our room.

"Welcome guys, my name is Amina , if you need anything I'll be happy to help" A young corper said as she saw us, I turned to look at her and I was stunned for a moment. She wore bum shorts and a spaghetti top, she was endowed and it took a lot of self control for me to take my eyes off her. Udemba on the other hand had no restraints, His jaw dropped and I had to shake him back to consciousness by dragging him into the room after Agu had opened the door, and dismissing the young lady with a faint *Thank you*.

"Guys, did you see what was back there, this would be our best mission ever" Udemba said as he smiled to himself and gestured for a handshake with me.

"Hey come back to your senses o, we are here on a mission, don't forget that" I admonished.

Udemba always had a weak spot for women. Little wonder he was always infatuated at the sight of beautiful women.

"Weytin be your own Dike" he talked back facing me now.

"Thank God say na only driving I dey do for here" he said as he looked away with a lascivious smile.

I decided to dismiss this and change the subject, but I receded into thoughts as there was nothing to say while I unpacked.

I thought of how miserable these few months would be without hearing from my family, as they couldn't contact me even if they wanted to, I was undercover. How I would have to resist the temptation of these beautiful corpses and the dangers I was about to face in undertaking this mission

I knelt down to pray, something I didn't do very often, and with the hope that God would watch over my family, I was a little relieved and asked if we would go out to eat that night.

Almost immediately, Amina walked into room with three plates of food on a tray.

"Hello boys, this is for you" she said as she shake her hips in a glorious fashion, I didn't even realize I was staring, she winked at me and I looked away saying the words *Jesus!* In my mind.

"If there is anything else you boys need, we are happy to help" she said as she walked out with a lewd smile while throwing her hips carelessly.

I was happy about the food notwithstanding, but something kept bothering me.

"We are happy to help" I was trying to figure out what she insinuated by that statement, was this a joint effort, or have we on our own walked into a whole new problem.

"Hello, this must be Agu from the Alpha Tango Squad, I am your inside man and would be helping from the inside, I don't know why you took on this suicide mission, but you will hear from me soon and meanwhile good luck" a voice talking over our encrypted phone, it appeared to be our inside man, he didn't help matters by calling it a suicide mission but we couldn't turn back even if we wanted to.

"Ok thanks" Agu replied and turned to both of us. We knew what were walking into but there are some people that need to make the sacrifices for things to happen and in this case we were those people.

"This food is getting cold o" Udemba said jokingly, we laughed and went for our food, jesting him and making silly jokes. We said stories and played out the evening happily as if all was well.

Little did we know, All was not well.

THE CIVIL WAR**EPISODE 3 - BEFORE TOMORROW**

It was very early in the morning, when we heard the explosion, we were all awoken by the rumbling sounds as the ground shook. We could hear screams and we sensed it was coming from close by. We were really frightened. I went outside my room, Agu behind me, I had my hand gun in my holster, it was the H &K 40-Caliber pistol.

“Make una enter inside o, dem dey shoot o” a young lady cried as she ran towards us from the gate.

The sound of gunshots that followed speedily ushered us back into our rooms. The fright had robbed us of our sleep. I laid on my back on the chair trying to give myself a rational explanation for what was going on. I knew I didn't need one, it was a war and these things were bound to happen

“What are they really fighting for, what would they stand to gain”, a very important question popped up in my head, since they were not the Hausa's I wondered what their aim was.

I closed my eyes, and when I opened them, it was daytime. It appeared I managed to doze off a little. I gave a long stretch and reached for my toothbrush and with one little stroke of paste, I went outside the room to brush my teeth.

I noticed an unusual calmness. Everyone behaved as if nothing had happened earlier this morning.

“Hi dear, sweet morning to you” a young lady walking past our room said to me. She was light-skinned, and had a beautiful face as well as an angelic voice.

Then she stopped,

“You're Dike right? I'm Amaka, a friend of Aminah” she said.

“Yes I am Dike, nice to meet you”, I replied, stretching out my hands for a handshake but I immediately withdrew them when I noticed they were covered in toothpaste and lather.

She gave me a weird smile and winked, then she turned and walked graciously back to her room, leaving me stunned as I starred helplessly. I regained myself when she was out of sight.

“God help me” I said, stroking my toothbrush against my teeth.

It had just been few weeks now I had been away from my family but it felt like ages. I was always distracted by thoughts of my wife and our little boy, worried for their safety, but there wasn't much I could do about that now. Finishing the mission would be the only way to see them again. Of course, that would be if we made it out alive.

I decided to take a nap, to clear my head. Agu always said that too much thinking hinders clear thinking. It didn't take me much time to fall asleep.

But when I opened my eyes, I saw a figure in front of me. He wore a mask and had a gun in his hand, and he was shouting in a language I didn't understand.

"Please, please, don't shoot", I said, rubbing my palms together in demonstration. I probably guessed he didn't understand English but I kept saying *"Please, don't shoot"*.

"I'm going to kill you today", he shouted

He removed his mask,

"Udemba", I couldn't believe it, I was shocked to my bones and at the same time, so scared I almost peed my pants.

"Udemba, please, you don't have to this" I begged.

"You have seen my face, you have to die" he said with a sinister voice.

"Bang", he pulled the trigger.

I was jolted awake.

My heart was racing as I was sweating all over.

Alas! It was a dream, a bad dream.

"Thank God", I said.

There was no one at home, I checked my wristwatch. The time was 7:30 pm. I wondered where Agu and Udemba must have wandered off to, knowing well that it wasn't a very safe neighbourhood. But I was all the more bothered about my dream.

"What could this mean", I said to myself.

I seldom had dreams, but when I did, they surely meant something. It could either be a sign, a premonition or maybe God was trying to warn me of some imminent danger. There were many explanations for this, I just knew I had to be a little more careful even amongst my squad.

"Knock, knock, knock"

"Who's there" I asked

"It's me, Amaka" the voice said.

I innocently went to the door and opened it, and with a smile on my face I greeted her.

"Hi, what's up" I said, trying to inquire if she had something to tell me.

"Can I come in?" she asked.

"Sure, yes" I answered, realizing I had just made a huge mistake.

Now I noticed she was wearing a small spaghetti top and bum shorts, and that we were the only ones in the room. Thoughts flooded my mind and I was in a serious struggle over control of myself.

"So what is it?" I asked.

She didn't say anything. She just smiled and walked towards me with a daring look on her face, I took few steps back but she kept coming closer.

"Wha-what are you doing", i asked, stammering.

"Don't you like what you see?" she said, pulling down her top, and still coming closer, her body almost touching mine.

"Get out", I said out of fear and anger.

She still persisted, trying to rub her hand on my body. I grabbed her hand with one hand, opened the door with the other and pushed her out, then I shut the door behind me.

I was breathing heavily, I didn't believe I could fight it off but I was glad I did.

Few minutes later, Udemba and Agu walked in. They were probably talking about something that made them giggle. I didn't narrate my ordeal to them, because I knew they would make jest of me and call me a coward, but I know I wasn't .

Turning down temptations from the opposite sex does not connote that I didn't have *the balls* to act, but it meant that I knew what was right and was ready to stick to it. Some say *"what your wife doesn't know can't hurt her"*, but that is just an excuse men use to hide their infidelity. Loyalty to one's spouse is important and necessary.

I just prayed I would have the strength to hold out much longer.

"Beep Beep ", It was our encrypted phone

"Hello" Agu said, as he pressed the loudspeaker button so we could all hear.

"This is Jega, your inside man. I have come up with a plan, and it seems to be the only way to execute this mission"

"You guys will have to work for the terrorist, because you can only tear them apart from the inside",

"There would be an evaluation for new recruits tomorrow, you have to be there. And be warned, if you fail the screening, you won't come out alive"

"You would be shown a variety of vacant positions to choose from, the higher the rank, the more access to information you get, and the more dangerous it becomes"

"Goodluck" he said as he cut off the line.

I was quiet, I knew the time had come. Tomorrow would have the answers.

THE CIVIL WAR**EPISODE 4 - THE EVALUATION**

I woke up, still feeling dizzy probably due to too much thinking. Today was the day we would literally walk into the lion's den. Our chances of survival were very thin, but it wasn't our call to make. I said a little prayer before we set out, with the hope that a superior being was listening and would grant my requests.

I, Agu and Udemba were on our way to the camp. The evaluation was in a few minutes and we wouldn't want to be late for a bunch of psychos.

"This is it" Agu whispered as we encountered a giant black gate, armed with barbed wires and security guards. Immediately we were within about 5-feet from the gate, we were blinded by very bright halogen light pointed at us.

"Turn around, go on your knees and place your hands behind your heads" a voice screamed from a gramophone.

We turned around, and with our hands behind our heads we were on our knees. It was still very early in the morning and amidst the chill from the morning mist, I was still sweating profusely. Before I could mutter few words intending to motivate the guys everything went blank. We were blindfolded

We were being moved into the camp. My senses were cutoff as I couldn't see anything.

Then we stopped, our blindfolds were removed, then the door was shut behind us, it was starting to seem like we were being held hostage, but I dismissed the thought hoping it might just be for security reasons. I turned around and saw some other people already in the room. It wasn't such a large room but it had a few lockers and one dim light bulb. I looked around and took a rough count of the people in the room, we were about thirty in the room.

"Agu, Udemba, be alert, I have a feeling something is going to happen here" I said to them. I was the smart one always observant, or you could say I was the brains, Agu was the brawls, while Udemba was the..., was just there. In few minutes, three other blindfolded guys were brought in... I noticed this time, it took longer to lock the door. I instantly took another estimate of the number of lockers and they were just about twelve.

"Guys, make una go stay for front of those lockers dem" I whispered to them, doing so myself.

"pssssshhhh" a hissing sound sneered, it seemed to be coming from the air vents. It was a gas, with white fumes. I couldn't guess what it was but I knew it wasn't healthy. I looked next to the lockers courtesy of my instincts, after a little struggle it opened, and I found a gas mask and a pistol, I put on the gas mask and then chaos started.

We all knew the lockers weren't enough, so only twelve of us would make it out of the room alive. I pointed my pistol forward threatening to shoot anyone that came closer to me. In few seconds we became twelve in the same position, a gas mask in the face and a gun in the hand. The others knew they

would die if they didn't do anything and they could still die if they did something. Then they decided to fight for their lives.

I was a sharp shooter, and I shot those who came for me. Within the next few minutes, the gas had killed everyone without a mask on. The door opened and a middle-aged man with strange mien walked in.

"Congratulations" he said with a smile on his face. I was shocked as to how a person could be smiling at the sight of about a dozen dead bodies.

"You can now proceed for the evaluation" he said. I was a bit relieved seeing that Agu and Udemba were also among the twelve. I looked with pity at the dead corpses, and I was grateful to God I was still standing. I never knew this was just the start.

"Not again" a guy among us exclaimed as twelve men came with blindfolds. All went blank again as we were escorted out of the rooms in blindfolds with no idea of what we would be facing next. I wondered what position would require this rigorous kind of evaluation, we would find out eventually.

"Welcome to the HIVE" a man said, he probably would be the leader and would look fiery, but I couldn't say with certainty as we were made to listen to him with our blindfolds on. It was said that only an elite few knew what his face looked like, but we had the task to take him out as quickly as possible and the level of security guarding his personality made it seem like an impossible task. Maybe it was.

"The twelve of you would be kept in the recruitment department for three days, where you will undergo light training and missions and we will also do background check on you to see if you can be trusted to be a member" he said.

"The vacant positions are in the intelligence department, the guys you would be replacing suffered horrible deaths due to their ignorance, so I hope you all won't turn out the same way, the results from your training would determine where you would be placed, and by the way we have need of only five of you, so do well to be included, you can go now." He said and probably signaled for us to be taken away.

"Only five, what the heck is wrong with these guys" I thought to myself.

They were ready to kill another seven and I couldn't guarantee that the three of us would all make it to the last five, so my plan was to complete the mission within the next three days.

"Only God knows how that would be possible" I said to myself. We had no idea who the leader was, no knowledge of how to navigate the camp, and also no idea of how to execute this 3-day mission.

Then it struck me

"Jega, our inside man" I smiled, as I remembered. Finding Jega would be a big boost for us, maybe this could work after all.

Our blindfolds were taken off, we were there, the recruitment department. The terrorist camp was very large, having many factions. Only the combat soldiers and the recruitment departments had their buildings few meters away from the main building.

The recruitment camp was a three-storey U-shaped building with a very large space in the middle. We were shown to our rooms. The rooms looked large, at least larger than where we stayed at Corper's Ville. Each room had one bunk bed with two bunks, and a single bed, three wardrobes a small television and a speaker. It was pretty clear that each room would have three occupants. We were a bit unlucky as none of us three were put in the same room. I began to wonder how we would execute our plans if we were not in the same room.

"Everyone change into your uniforms and come to the large space in the middle immediately" a voice said from the speaker, at least now I knew what the speaker was for. I opened one of the wardrobes, automatically taking it as mine. There were five of the same clothing, I guessed that was the uniform, it was a black polo, black trousers and boots. I came down and was amazed to see a large number of people. It looked to me that there was a lot we didn't know about these terrorists, or whatever they were.

We were divided into training groups, the twelve of us were put in one group. I was glad that at least we would have a way to communicate and that would be during training.

"We have to finish this in three days because we might not pass this training and am not ready to die" I whispered to Agu. He was in front on me as we marched in a single line to our section where we would be training.

"Me too, but how? Three days is small na" Agu replied, still whispering.

"We need to find Jega" I said.

The terrorist camp was a very big place, searching for Jega would be like searching for a needle in a haystack. I began to think how in the world we would be able to find a person when we only had his name and going around asking would make us look suspicious.

"Good day recruits" a voice interrupted my thoughts. It was a man, I guessed he was the instructor. He was handsome, but I wasn't moved by looks, I was trained to always assume the worst, so I assumed he would be evil like most of the others.

"My name is Jega, and I would be your training instructor", the man said.

I was shocked, I smiled.

THE CIVIL WAR

EPISODE 5 - FALLING APART

***** *The same day******

"God is on our side" I said to myself

I had been cracking my brain for the past hour, thinking about how we would find Jega, and here he was, he came right to us. He couldn't recognize us, that was normal seeing we hadn't met face to face before. We engaged in many drills and exercises. Training that day was mainly physical.

"Gong gong going" a bell rang. Everyone assumed it was time to get back to our rooms.

"Back to your rooms" said an old man, still ringing the bell.

I cornered Jega as he made moves to return. I noticed he was also looking around intently maybe hoping to spot anyone that seemed to be in search of someone too.

"Excuse me you are our insider aren't you?" I asked, just to be sure.

"Are you the guys from CIA Enugu division" he asked.

"Yes, yes" I answered, this time with Agu and Udemba nodding behind me.

"You have five minutes, so shoot", he said, meaning we should say whatever we had to say as fast as we could. Judging from his manner of speaking when he talked, I had guessed he wasn't so supportive of what we were doing.

"Sir our plan is to finish this mission in three days. We will need to get hold of the blueprints to the main camp building" I said.

"I can get you the blueprints by tomorrow but there is one problem" he said, making us a lot more nervous than we were already.

"What is the problem?" I asked, hoping it would be a solvable one.

"You would have to carry out this mission tomorrow night, that is the only open window you might have" he said.

"That would be very risky. Even if you succeed in giving us the blueprints, we would still have a problem navigating unseen" Agu protested.

"Why? Why must it be tomorrow night?" Udemba asked the question that seemed to be ruminating our minds.

"You guys are not safe. It's only a matter of time before the terrorists find out who you really are"

"I have to go now, I will hand you the blueprints during tomorrow's training, good luck" Jega said as he shared handshakes to us concurrently.

The night was still young, I had just returned to my room from the bathroom. I had many thoughts running in my mind.

"You guys are not safe, it's only a matter of time before the terrorist find out who you really are" I remembered Jega's words. He sounded very certain that our cover would be blown very soon. I wondered if there was anything he was hiding from us.

I was still very confused as I began to wonder how many sides existed in this war. Was it the Igbo's against the Hausa's, or was it the HIVE against everyone else, I didn't even know the HIVE existed until few weeks ago.

"The Government isn't taking any sides, are they in on all of this too?" all these thoughts kept flooding my mind.

I reached for the remote and put on the mini television. My other roommates seemed to care less about what was going on in other parts of the country. I guess that is one of the distinctions between a combat soldier and intelligence analysts, the former just follows orders without question while the latter feeds and thrives on availability on information.

A young man in a black tux was the anchor, or newscaster. He rushed through the news headlines, and caught my attention when I saw my neighborhood shown on the television.

"There was a fire outbreak in a neighborhood in Ogiye, Enugu state, The cause of the fire is not yet known, but the fire was put out by the late intervention of the fire service, few casualties were recorded", the anchor continued.

I dropped the remote in shock, tears freely found their way down my cheeks, I couldn't help the feeling and emotions crowding me now. I didn't know if my family was affected. Knowing that I had no way of contacting them made it worse. A great feeling of guilt weighed me down. I had left my family unprotected, for what? a stupid war?.

I wouldn't be able to bear it if anything happened to them, I wouldn't be able to live with myself.

I cried, sobbed, sulked. They say men shouldn't be seen crying but I wouldn't be a man without my wife and kid, I would just be some random combat soldier with nothing to fight for. I tried to console myself by steering my ship with positivism, telling myself that they probably survived the outbreak and by tomorrow when this mission would be over, I would go back to see them.

Amidst the tears on my face, I summoned courage and decided to channel my anger and guilt into tomorrow's showdown. I was ready to do whatever it would take to finish this once and for all.

I forced myself to sleep, praying not to have any of those strange dreams again.

Maybe Agu and Udemba watched the news also, it didn't really matter now, I had to be hundred percent for tomorrow.

****the next day*****

We were almost done with our training session for the day. I couldn't concentrate throughout the session, my mind had wandered away on many occasions. This was our second day in the recruitment camp. My tension grew by the hour.

"This is the blueprints to the building, am afraid this is all the help I would be offering" Jega said, letting us know that he would no longer be of help to our course.

Agu collected the blueprint and gave it to me. The fact that we were placed in different rooms meant that only one of us would study the blueprint for the mission. I was the best option for this task with respect to my area of specialization.

"We would meet at the backyard by 9pm, say your prayers, and Dike, study the blueprints very well. You are our only hope" Agu said to us.

We all journeyed back to our rooms, of course at the sound of the bell. It was about 5pm in the evening and I had just about 4 hours to study the blueprints and be able to perfectly navigate the base.

I sat down on my bed and opened the paper, it was a bit complex but I was getting the hang of it. Stuffing some snacks in my mouth while studying the blueprints.

Two hours had passed now and I was becoming more nervous. I had my gear ready and so was my mind. We were going to assassinate someone with very little information and manpower, we had no idea how tight his security detail was or the manner of fire arms they possessed. It was truly a suicide mission according to Jega.

"Freeze, your hands in the air, don't say a word" someone said whispering.

I looked up and I saw three masked men in the room, each of them with a gun, their guns had silencers. I pinched myself to make sure this wasn't another dream. Unfortunately it wasn't. My roommates were asleep and I was afraid if I made any moves I would get shot. I forgot all about the mission instantly as the only thing on my mind now was fear for my life. The men were advancing towards me now, and anxiety and fear gripped me the more. In a flash one of them cornered me and covered my nose with a white cloth. I knew it was chloroform and in a few seconds I passed out.

"Wakey Wakey" I heard a voice faintly.

My head felt stuffy, I opened my eyes slowly it was probably the very bright light or the after effect of the chloroform. I immediately remembered that I was abducted, with the rush of consciousness I tried freeing myself. My hands were tied to a metal pole behind me. My mouth was sealed with duct tape. I looked around it was an empty room probably in a warehouse.

Some men walked in. It was the same man we had seen in the base before we were sent to the recruitment camp. They all had big guns in their hands and mean looks on their faces. I must have done something wrong, I had no idea what was happening here.

"Mr Dike, what were you thinking? That you could walk in here and take me out? You and your team? Enugu is it?" the man said, waving his hands signaling that some people be brought inside. It was Agu and Udemba with their hands tied behind their backs.

I was surprised, there was no way anyone could have figured that out, except of course if they had help from the inside. Maybe someone ratted us out. I didn't know who to trust or what to believe anymore. I was a smart guy but this was beginning to confuse me.

"Our network is far bigger than you think, we have men in high places. You have no idea what you walked into" the man said removing the duct tape from my mouth and signaling again. I wondered who would be coming in this time.

It was a young woman and a little boy.

"Daddy, Junior, Honey, Babe" this was by far the most unfortunate exchange of pleasantries between I and my family. Relieved they were unharmed in the fire, but this was not how I expected to meet them. Oh God! I couldn't do anything but pray that they won't be hurt.

"Please, leave them out of this, they have done nothing wrong, please let them go" I pleaded already in tears, Agu and Udemba also pleading. They knew what my family meant to me. I was less worried about how they got to find out about my family. I would be devastated if things went wrong.

"I'm sorry Dike, I have to do something, I can't help it" he said pleading sarcastically.

"Don't worry I will give you 24 hours to mourn before you join your family"

He took out his pistol and

"Bang Bang" he fired two shots. My wife and child fell to the ground.

My world had just fallen apart.

THE CIVIL WAR**EPISODE 6 - EMOTIONS**

This was too much pain.

"Nooo! Nooo!" I wailed.

"What did they do to deserve any of this" I said to myself overwhelmed in tears.

I had never felt this much sorrow in my entire life. It was as if a part of me had been torn out forcefully and I was left to bleed to death. I wished the ground could open up and swallow me, I sobbed.

I cried even more as I closed my eyes and remembered her lovely face. I remembered her wonderful smile and magical touch, her beauty and innocence. I remembered my smart little boy, he also had that innocent look, probably got that from his mother. But all these would be gone forever.

The thought that I would never see my family again broke me. I was blank, no idea of what to do anymore. I was confused and sad.

"Dike, am really sorry about this, but now is not the time to mourn, we have to find a way out of here as soon as possible" Agu said to me. I couldn't see his face clearly due to the stream of tears that accumulated in front of my eyes but I could tell he was also crying.

"What if I don't want to leave, eh? I want to die o" I replied Agu, still crying hopelessly.

I remembered the man who killed my family mentioned that he would give me 24 hours to mourn before I would go and join them. I couldn't think of anything else at the moment. It was clear that my emotions were clouding my judgment. The sounds of the gunshots were still replaying in my head. This war had finally taken what was dearest to me. I had no reason to die for this mission anymore, I had no reason to live either.

"That man said he would give you 24hours to mourn before you join them, I don't want to be here when he comes o" Udemba said.

I calmed down a little, I was only sniffing this time. Maybe it's how we were created, the fact that nobody wants to experience death. Death, which is something we're completely certain would catch up to us. I was more than sad for what happened to my family but it seemed I didn't want to die, not anytime soon at least.

We had no way of telling what time it was but I knew it would be past midnight already. I would not push my luck to suggest that we wait till daybreak but I had no ideas at the moment. Agu and Udemba were probably thinking of a way to escape too but I knew there were counting on me to give the best suggestion. I couldn't come up with anything, my head was still blank. I couldn't blame myself, I just experienced the greatest horror any human being could.

"Can any of you try to break free from your constraints" I asked.

"Guy, this thing dey too tight" Udemba complained.

That was the best I could come up with at the time. Surely, it was disappointing but I couldn't help it, I mean, if anyone were in my shoes what would they have done? They would probably be rolling on the ground and shouting but I was calm, waiting for death to come pick me up.

We gave each other the *goodbye forever* look, I retired into sleep, the lasting tears made it easier for me to transition into sleep.

I woke up, or rather I was woken up by some huge men in black clothes.

"Where were they taking us to" I pondered in my mind.

These men were brutal that was for sure but I had no idea what orders they had exactly and the fact that we were not blindfolded this time made me even more scared. We came out of the warehouse and were still on the move. It seemed the warehouse was located in a very large camp, it looked like the terrorist camp.

"Oga abeg where be dis" I decided to ask the man pulling me by my clothes, it was a stupid move but I had no fear. The guard dragging me by my shirt gave me a demeaning look and I totally understood that he was not in any way going to say anything to me.

"Ah Ah! This is the terrorist camp" I said with certainty when I sighted a poster I had seen before.

We became completely certain when we saw the main camp building, but this time there was a gathering of people outside, a lot of people. I couldn't decipher what they were saying but I knew nothing good was going to come out of our presence in the gathering.

"This would be an example to all those who think they can take us down" those were the words of the man who was addressing the assembly. I recognized his face, he was the guy who opened the door for the 12 of us that passed the test in the gas room. He seemed to be the orator or mouthpiece of the leader because it was known that only very few people know what the leader's face looked like. We were one of the lucky few people but we were going to be dead anytime soon.

We climbed on to the podium, there were camera's rolling. The broadcast would go viral. I could see Jega in audience; he kept mute and was watching. This was the part where I would say my last prayer.

"These three men were spies, planning to take out our leader" the man said.

"We are sending a message to the government and all other agencies against us, we are coming for you" the man said signaling.

"Oh boy!" I exclaimed

These signals never meant anything good, it was either to kill someone or abduct another. This time it was to kill, I was sure of that when three men came up with guns and were ready to fire at us. They took their stance and were ready to fire on command. I looked at Agu and Udemba one last time, little drops of tears had formed in my eyes, I was always the emotional one.

"I am glad I met you guys" I whispered to Agu and Udemba, they were both standing on my left. I seemed to be the one that was most ready to die.

"For the HIVE" the man shouted raising his hands,

"For the HIVE" the others chorused in response, I assumed this was the signal. I closed my eyes, I couldn't bear to watch my own death.

"Bang Bang Bang Bang" several shots were fired.

The shooting continued, I could still hear shooting, I was still thinking. How?

"Was this a midpoint between life and death, how was I still thinking," I dialogued in my thoughts.

"Dike Dike Dike" I heard my name, faintly, the gunshots sounds were still sounding.

I realized my eyes were still shut, I opened them. I saw the men who I thought fired shots at us lying on the ground. I took a swift survey of my body and I wasn't hurt, there was turmoil, the assembly had been dissolved, it seemed someone had come to our rescue.

"Dike Dike" I looked to my left and saw Agu and Udemba signaling me to come over. I ran towards them and we started running away. In few seconds, the HIVE had started shooting back, it was a very intense fight and many people had been caught in the cross fire. The guys fighting the HIVE had hefty artilleries and strong firepower, I was certain they weren't from the CIA Enugu division.

I found a sharp object around and cut myself loose, I did the same for Agu and Udemba. We started running trying to dodge stray bullets. Our main aim at the time was just to get as far away as possible from the camp. Taking the route through the recruitment camp seemed the safest way. I suggested this to the guys. They concurred, and we started running in that direction. The terrorist took little notice of us, they were all busy fighting for their lives, a fight that seemed to be going in their favor. We were almost out of the camp when someone cornered us, pointing a gun at us and threatening to shoot if we took any step further.

It was Jega. Yes! Jega, our insider.

I was shocked to my bones. How could he turn on us, we thought he was on our side; he probably was the one that told the terrorist of our true identity, and also the reason why my family is dead now. I wanted to charge at him but I was disadvantaged, Jega had a gun in his hand and he looked like he was going to shoot any minute from now.

"Baaam" someone struck him on the head, rendering him unconscious, it was Amaka.

"Amaka" I said both surprised and relieved. Amaka was the lady who tried to seduce me back at corper's Ville.

"Guys come on, I can get you all out of here" she said.

We followed her, we had no other options, no other safe options. I had many questions on my mind, but right now it was all about making it out alive. Amaka took a different route. It was a shortcut and a secret passage out of the camp.

"Why is she helping us?"

"How did she know where to find us?" These questions continued bothering me as we kept running.

"I know you have questions Dike, I will answer all of them when we get to safety" Amaka said.

We were out of the camp in few minutes. We arrived at a house. It was a storey building. She opened the gate and we entered. We entered the house and were very relieved. We just cheated death again.

"This is my house" Amaka said

"Why then do you stay at corper's Ville?" I asked.

"And how did you know where to find us?" I asked again, partially diminishing the relevance of the first question.

"I came into your room, few days ago. I didn't find anyone there, so I decided to take a look around and I found out about what you were planning, I said to myself that it was none of my business but my heart kept bothering to come find you. I was going to forfeit but I changed my mind when I saw armored vehicles storming the neighborhood. I decided to come and help, that was if I could find you" she narrated.

"But why, why help us, you know only very little about us" I asked?

"I think I kind of like you" she said blushing.

I looked up in amazement, I discovered I had never really noticed her like that. I smiled. It seemed I liked her too, or maybe I was just happy she came to save us today.

"I'll leave you guys to talk, there is food in the kitchen and you can take your shower, the guest room is that way" she said pointing in a direction. She turned around and went into a room, probably her room. I was lost in my thoughts at the moment. My wife and son just passed and Amaka just said she likes me. The HIVE was just raided by people we didn't know, and we just had a narrow escape from our deaths.

"I'll shower first" I said.

Maybe it would help take my mind of things.

I entered the guest room after taking my bath, it wasn't a very big room. I sat down on the bed and I burst into tears. Agu and Udemba were probably eating in the kitchen. I had no appetite, I was crying and murmuring words of sorrow. Then someone walked in, Amaka. She had a tray of food in her hands. She dropped her smile when she saw me crying, she dropped the tray on the bed and sat down beside me.

"Why are you crying?" she asked, looking into my eyes.

"I lost my family, my wife and kid back there" I replied my tears now intensifying.

She placed her hand on mine. I looked at her face, my view was blurred but I could still sense her beauty.

"I am very sorry for your loss, but please stop crying, it breaks me to see you like this, everything would be ok" she said in efforts to console me.

"How can I sto---" I was interrupted, my mouth shut by hers, She kissed me.

Immediately my tears stopped, I was surprised but she succeeded in calming me down. She walked out of the room and I faced my food, my thoughts still flying.

"Was I beginning to like her too?"

THE CIVIL WAR

EPISODE 7 - LAGOS DE CURAMO

It's been two days now since we escaped from the terrorists, thanks to Amaka, and we had been staying at her house for the past two days. We had no other options, not at the time. I constantly had moments of emotional breakdown anytime I brought to memory the tragedy that befell me. The loss of my family had devastated me and I wasn't sure I would be able to recover. I thought about what step we could take next. I knew there was no one we could trust now, not in the force, not anywhere. The terrorists were still scouring the neighborhood in search of us. They went as far as putting a bounty on our heads, promising loads of money to anyone who would be willing to give information about our whereabouts. I could not go outside, nor do anything. All I did everyday was to sit down, think about how miserable this war has made me and end up crying myself into sleep.

I gave less thought about Amaka's fondness towards me. She was a brave woman and also smart but I wasn't sure I wanted to have anything personal or intimate with her. I just wanted some alone time and aside for pleasantries exchange and coincidental stares and gazes we hadn't talked much since she kissed me.

It was morning already and I was still lying on the bed nursing thoughts and replaying memories. Everyone else were awake and in the sitting room. The television was on and they were probably watching something important because they all seemed very engaged.

"Dike Dike, come! You have to see this" Agu called from the sitting room.

"I'm coming," I replied putting on a pair of trousers. I enjoyed going to bed in light clothing like a singlet and boxer shorts. They made it easier for me to fall asleep and I felt more comfortable in them.

I pulled the trouser up my waist and made my way into the sitting room. It was a cable network news broadcast, and they were talking about the showdown at the HIVE. They had live broadcast of the event that day. I saw myself on the screen, with hands tied behind my back standing on the podium likewise Agu and Udemba.

"It seemed they were about to execute the men before some armed men intervened. We cannot say with certainty who these men were fighting for but we know for sure that the government is still keeping mute and has not taken any evident action on these matters" those were the words of the young lady who was the anchor of the news broadcast.

"So this means that the government is still keeping quiet about this", Udemba said shaking his head.

"Let's go back to Enugu, maybe Uche may have the solution to all this confusion" Agu suggested.

I realized that I had never really thought about Uche, not until now. He was the one who sent us on this mission in the first place, but he didn't try to contact us in anyway and we hadn't heard from him since. I was beginning to think he had a part to play in our failure in this mission but I couldn't judge yet.

"We can't go back to Enugu, the CIA is compromised, we have to find another way" I replied

"How are you sure about what you're saying" Udemba tried to argue with me.

"How else can you explain the fact that these guys discovered our true identities and could find out about my wife and child? It must have been someone, maybe someone on the inside that gave them the information" I explained to them, my eyes already watering.

"I wish we could just have some more information about what the HIVE is planning, I would know the next step to take" I said. I knew finding any piece of information about their plans would put us in the right direction. I had nothing to lose so I was ready to see this war to an expected end.

"Dike, there is something I found in the camp the day I rescued you, and I think it might be of help" Amaka said.

"What is that? How did you find it?" I asked her.

"I found it inside the metal rod I used to hit that man on the head" she responded as she walked hastily into her room in search of it. She was back in a minute and handed the paper to me.

It was a map.

It was a map of Nigeria. I was almost about to dismiss this discovery by Amaka until I took a closer look and found out that there were some inscriptions on the map. There red dots at certain points but all the red dots were connected to a single large red dot. The tiny red dots coincided with locations which included the terrorist camp and some other places. There was a red dot on the country's capital in Lagos; there was a red dot on my neighborhood. The bigger red dot was also in Enugu, the University of Nigeria in Nsukka.

"Dike, what does this mean exactly" Udemba asked me.

"I'm not sure" I replied.

I couldn't interpret the map yet but I knew it meant something, like a strategy or plan. Most of the places on the maps have suffered attacks.

"I think this is a hit list. Like a list of all the places they planned to attack" I said after a little deliberation.

"This means that the capital might be under attack anytime soon" Agu said.

What we all feared seemed to be approaching with certainty. An attack on the capital might lead unspeakable tragedies.

"We have to warn the president" I said.

"I don't see any reason why we should be helping the government or the president. They have been silent about the war all this while" Amaka said.

She had a good point. I was willing to help the government who hasn't showed any interest in the happenings over here, but I wasn't ready to let the HIVE have their way.

I needed more information, most of all, about the big red dot on the map. I needed to know what was in the university that the HIVE wanted. It could be the key to ending this war.

"Maybe the president would have intel on what lies in the university" Agu said.

"Ok, let's say we agree to warn him, how do we get to him?" Amaka asked.

"I don't know exactly, but I know that if we could infiltrate a terrorist camp, we can get to the president" I said in response to her.

"But right now, getting out of here is our present problem" I said.

"How do we get out? The HIVE is everywhere and they would be ready kill us if they see us" Udemba said.

"I know a way we can get out of here and to Lagos without being seen" Amaka said

"Oh lord, this is the most uncomfortable I've ever been since ever" Udemba complained.

I couldn't blame him, I was as much uncomfortable also. We had to hide inside a trailer load container carrying fruits. The smell of the fruits overwhelmed us but at least it gave us something to eat for the past two days now.

We had been on the road for two days now, living on fruits the container provided. We were probably in Lagos now, just waiting for the container to be offloaded.

"Oya make una come down o, una don try" the driver said as he opened the door of the container.

We all rushed out immediately, saying *Thank you Sir* as we did so. Amaka talked with the driver for few minutes and we were on our way. Amaka had been very helpful these past few days. She agreed to come to Lagos with us and to see this mission through. I was also beginning to grow fond of her as well, but I still cloaked my feelings as I was still mourning the death of my family.

"We will stay at my house here" I said.

I worked in Lagos before I was deployed to Enugu and that was before the war. I lived at Ikotun in Lagos. It was a rural area in the state.

The roads were busy and there was a lot of traffic. We boarded several commuter buses painted yellow and black and had to endure the continuous shouting and noises from bus conductors and other boys natively called *agbero*, collecting money from the commercial vehicles at different stops on the road.

About an hour later we arrived at my home, a duplex. The paint had faded and it was evident that it had been abandoned for a while. I opened the gate with a master key I had. The compound was overrun by weeds but the place still seemed intact.

I opened the door and showed everyone to the rooms they would be staying. We would have to stay for a few days to plan our visit to the president. The HIVE could attack any time soon, so we didn't have any second to waste.

"Lagos is a large city, be careful here, there are different kinds of people, the dangerous ones inclusive" I said giving closing remarks.

"I would go to Ikeja tomorrow and see if I can get to any of my former colleagues in the CIA there" I said.

"Goodnight everyone"

"Goodnight o" they replied.

"Amaka stay, let's talk" I said.

She stopped and looked at me, she didn't look happy. The others had gone to their rooms and it was just the two of us in the living room.

"I just wanted to talk about the other day and---"

"I know, I shouldn't have done that, you're still in grief for your family, am sorry" she said, interrupting me.

"I wanted to say thank you, for everything and that day too" I said.

I went closer to her and gave her a kiss on the forehead. She smiled. We both smiled.

"Good night, Sleep tight" I said, now heading to my room.

I was worried about what could happen at the capital, but I was frightened about what could be at the university, the big red dot. *It can't be good* I thought.

I just hoped everything would go as planned.

THE CIVIL WAR**EPISODE 8 - SECRETS**

"BEEP BEEP"

I was woken up by the loud ringing of my mobile phone. Today was the day I would get all the answers. I planned to be awake in the next few minutes and get ready to leave because Ikeja wasn't very proxy to my residence, but this unknown caller had saved me time.

"Hello, who is this?" I asked. I didn't have the caller's contact but I assumed it might be an acquaintance.

"Dike we have a job for you" a voice said from the receiver.

I was confused. I had no idea what kind of job or who this caller was. I hoped it wasn't more trouble.

"Who are you? And what nonsense are you saying" I switched to offensive. I had different mood swings these days and I wasn't at my very best mood at the time.

"You will do as I say. Obey every instruction and carry out this task" the voice continued.

This voice was very confident, I knew he would have some leverage against me for him to speak with this much audacity. But I thought to myself, what leverage this could be. I had no family, the only people left that I cared about were in my house.

"What if I don't? What would you do?" I dared him, hoping to hear what he would leverage against me.

"I have your family, and if you want to see them again, you would do as I say" the man said.

I was momentarily stunned. *Was this an expensive joke? Or was my memory beginning to fail me? Was he trying to mock my grief? Or was he actually serious?* I didn't know what to think.

"Is this joke? What do you mean 'you have my family'? They were shot right in front of my eyes, I saw their lifeless bodies carried out" I argued.

"This is proof" the voice said followed by few seconds of silence and static thuds. It seemed like he was passing the receiver to someone.

"Hello, Honey"

A female voice said. It sounded too familiar. It was her voice. I was confused. How was this possible?

"Valerie? Is that you?" I asked. Tears filled my eyes instantly.

"Yes, Dike, you need to come get us, Junior is---" she was interrupted.

"Hey whoever you are, if you lay any finger on them I'm going to kill you" I said fuming with anger.

"Slow down Dike. This is how it's going to work. You do as I say, then you can see your family again" the man said.

"We know you're in Lagos to find answers and that is exactly what you would do. Find out what is in the University and get it for me." He said.

"Please don't touch them. I will do as you say" I answered

"Very good, very g—"

"Who are you, and how is my family alive?" I asked again lowering my tone to depict more seriousness.

"We tested a new design of bullets on your family, it was a rubber bullet that contained adenosine and lignocaine. One shot to the chest would stop the heart beat temporarily"

"And am surprised you didn't recognize my voice. It's me Jega from the HIVE, Good luck Dike" he said cutting off the line.

"Jesus Christ! What is all this? Why me?" I thought to myself.

I knew it would be for the best if I kept this secret to myself. I was overwhelmed in relief at the sound of Valerie's voice. There was a glimmer of hope. I had something to fight for again.

I went to the shower and had my bath. I left a note on the table for the guys telling them there's food in the store. I said a little prayer while standing and set out.

Although it was early in the morning, the streets of Lagos were already busy. Many low income earners struggling to board commercial buses to their various work locations. The luxurious cars of high class citizens also cruised the main roads.

"Ikeja wole fifty-fifty naira, enter with your change o" a bus conductor shouted. He looked like he was in his late twenties. He exposed his brown set of teeth beneath his very dark lips while shouting. He looked unkempt but this was a very familiar or rather uniform appearance peculiar to bus conductors in Lagos state.

"Oga driver wait o" I said trying to enter into one of the buses on the move. A lot of people were also struggling to enter. For a moment it seemed like all the people in the community wanted to squeeze their way into the bus. I entered got into the bus and entered the back seat.

The journey was a bit quiet. Only the murmuring and grunting of the bus conductor punctured the silence at certain intervals. The inhabitants here were lucky because they didn't feel the intensity of the war around here. They seem to describe it as a feud between the other two major tribes but it clearly wasn't.

"Owo da?" the bus conductor asked me in the native Yoruba language. I understood Yoruba to a comfortable extent and also judging from his hand gesture, I knew he was requesting payment for service from me. I reached for my back pocket and brought out my wallet. I gave him a hundred naira note. One that had probably passed through the hands of thousands judging from its shabby look.

"Oga this your money sef" he complained as he received the money but immediately shifted his focus to the next passenger.

In few minutes we got to the bus stop and alighted from the bus. The CIA base here wasn't located in residential parts of this community, rather a secluded part for the sake of confidentiality. I could still remember the way to the base. I entered a cab that took me to the place.

Nothing much had changed since I last worked here, it still looked the same. I showed my ID card to the scanner in front of the gate. Almost immediately the gate opened and a security officer greeted me. He was a new guy and probably had no idea who I was. I raised my arms sideways for him to search me with the metal detector he had with him. I had no metal on me, so he let me pass and I entered the main building.

It was a very large building some little things had changed since the last time.

"Hello Sir, your face doesn't look familiar, what brings you here" a young man asked me. He was dressed in a black tuxedo and a red tie. He looked very smart and I assumed he was also transferred here after I left because I didn't recognize his face.

"Mr Segun. Nice to meet you" I said getting his name from the name tag he wore.

"I would like to see Mr Obinna Eze, the head of the Intelligence analysis department" I said.

I used to work under Mr. Emeka back then. He was trustworthy man and I believed he was the only one that could help me out in this situation.

"Ok just go to the second floor you'll find him there" Segun said.

"Ok thanks" I replied.

"Sorry I forgot to ask, what division are you from?" he asked.

"Enugu division" I replied. He nodded in satisfaction. I walked away towards the elevator trying not to appear disturbed. There wasn't so much activity going on in the first floor but the distant noise I could hear from above suggested that the upper floors were much busier.

"Dike good to see you" "Long time" "Where have you been?" I got reactions from various people that recognized me.

I walked into Mr. Obinna's office. He seemed a bit preoccupied with what he was doing but he dropped them and gave me a hug the second he saw me. He was my mentor back then and we nurtured a very healthy relationship.

"Dike, wow I can't believe it's you. You didn't call or text, I thought something went wrong" he said. He immediately cloaked his happiness when he saw that I was still frowning.

"Did something go wrong?" he asked.

"The HIVE. They have my family. I need to rescue them" I said.

"Jesus Christ!" he exclaimed. "So what can I do to help?" he asked.

"I need information; top secret information. I think I know the reason behind the war and I need your help to stop it" I said. He looked at me with keen interest and asked "How? What information?"

"I need to know what is hidden in the University. I think that is the reason why all this is going on" I said.

"Dike, that is top secret. I don't even know what is there, I just know it's in the University but I help with something that may be of assistance" he said.

"What is that?" I asked.

"It's a secret schematic to the University containing the underground bunker where this thing is supposedly located. But Dike, this may ruin my career if it gets to the wrong hands. No one must know about this." He said.

"But why isn't the Government interfering? Is the discretion of this thing worth more than the lives of hundreds lost in this war?" I asked.

"The Government won't act until they have proof of activities that threaten national security. So when you are sure something would be up you can call us. This hard drive contains the schematics" he said giving me a black USB drive.

I took out a mini flash drive I had and copied it leaving me with two copies of the schematics. We said goodbyes and I was on my way home.

I returned home by noon. The house seemed quiet and the gate was unlocked. Something felt wrong. I entered into the house and saw armed men pointing guns at my friends.

"We are not here to fight hand us the flash drive and we'll be on our way" they said. I did so as they threatened to shoot if I didn't comply.

They left the house. I was relieved that no one was hurt. Agu, Udemba and Amaka were obviously very scared but relieved I came back at the time I did.

"We have to leave, this place is no longer safe" I said.

THE CIVIL WAR**EPISODE 9 - UNSANCTIONED**

It came as a shock. It was all over the news.

The capital was attacked. Many civil servants and government officials lost their lives. No one knows if the President survived or not. There was also a bombing in the CIA division I visited. No one survived. I was distressed as I found out at a newspaper vendor stand at the bus stop. The place was crowded with men who shouted at the top of their voices arguing over the cause and the winning party of this war. They had very little understanding of what was going on and their lack of work-to-do didn't help matters at all.

At this point I was confused. I couldn't see the president because of the attack, I couldn't stay at my home because the HIVE could come looking for me and that would put us in danger. Some other people had a copy of the schematics, I had no idea who they were but I knew for sure that they would be gunning for that which was in the university.

"Dike we need a place to stay before the sun sets" Amaka said.

Now I realized they had been walking behind me the whole time.

A place to stay was also a problem at this time. I had many friends in Lagos but I didn't know who to trust. Anyone could be a terrorist in disguise.

"We need to head back to the university and find this thing before any other person does" I said turning back to them.

"But how would we know where it is? I thought those men back there took the USB drive" Agu asked.

"I made another copy on my own flash" I replied him, feeling happy that my precaution paid off.

I had all the plans mapped out in my head. I was going to go take on this herculean task, I just hoped my plans would be actualized the way it was envisioned.

I couldn't bear the stress of the long distance to Enugu, so I picked up enough money from the house to book flights.

Transportation by air was by far the fastest but not the safest. In about half an hour we arrived Enugu. We took a cab that would take us straight to the CIA camp. I knew I couldn't trust anyone, but at the moment I had no choice. I just prayed in my heart that they all especially Uche hadn't been compromised.

My thoughts were overthrown by the sights I witnessed as I peered through the window of the taxi. It was a disaster. They were dead bodies scattered around on the floor. Buildings were wrecked from fire, many people seemed stranded with no place to go. Companies were shut down, schools were no longer

in session, churches were afraid to open and armed men roamed the streets every hour of the day. It was a mess, a very big mess.

I felt very bad for Enugu. Her shining glory had been turned into a gory mess.

"I no sabi why anybody go still dey travel come this place o, Abi una dey find something?" The driver asked, his eyes still fixed on the road.

He was right. Nobody should be leaving their homes to come down here, but there are those of us who have duties to fulfill and also my home was here.

Not before long we arrived at the camp. It was a warm welcome, what we received.

"Dike what happened to you guys" Uche asked.

I was so happy to see him after such a long time. The place wasn't looking the same in such little time.

"It is a long story. We went through a lot of things. We escaped death many but a few times. We were kidnapped, shot at, attacked. It goes on and on." I said.

"I am very sorry, I am to blame for all that happened to you. I shouldn't have sent you on that mission in the first place" Uche said.

I could discern the emotions in his eyes, he was truly sorry for everything. I know the guilt that one can feel for making an error that turns out to cost more harm than was intended.

"You don't have to be sorry for anything. It's our job" I said.

"Come, let's go to my office. I believe we have some things to discuss" Uche said swiping his hands towards the direction of his office.

We went into his office and took our seats.

"Who is that lady that came with you?" Uche asked

"Her name is Amaka, we met her at Corper's Ville. We would have been dead if not for her." I said.

I wasn't exaggerating. Amaka had been really helpful. We owed her our lives.

"I hope you know enough about her" he asked me again.

I knew anyone could betray and that love or friendship makes a betrayal even more painful but I was ready to trust Amaka.

"I trust her" I replied.

"Ok if you say so" he said.

"So, brief me, what's going on?" he asked.

I didn't know if it was a personal question or if he was asking as my boss. In any case I knew I had to answer.

"There is something in the university and I think that is the key to ending this war. We don't know what it is, but we have to get it before any other person does" I explained.

"So how do you get it? The university since the war has turned into a testing ground for violence and weapons" he said.

"We have to take the risk" I said.

"Hope you have thought this through? I heard about your family and am sorry for your loss, I hope you are doing this in clarity of mind?" he asked.

I didn't want to tell him about the latest development. Maybe because I wasn't so sure myself, but there was a large probability that my family was still alive and finding this thing was the only way to see them again. I was a patriot, but this time everything I was doing was just for my family. I cared little if the war never ends, all I cared about now was seeing my family again and I was ready to do anything to achieve this feat.

"Thank you for your sympathy, but I know I have to do this" I said.

I kept the knowledge of my family and Jega's threat a secret from the guys. I felt that way it would be easier for me to do what needed to be done.

"We would need help in getting it, that's why I am here" I said.

"I would ready some men, that would go with you and I also give you some ammunition. That's the best I can do seeing this isn't a sanctioned mission." He said.

"Thanks that would be helpful" I said.

The night was young and we had all retired to our rooms as allocated to us in the camp. We had no home to go and the camp here was the only place we could feel safe.

I laid on my bed facing the roof in my tiny room, I was lost in thoughts as my gazed was so fixated as someone trying to read something of the roof.

"knock knock" on my door.

The door opened and it was Amaka in her sleeping clothes.

"Whatsup" I said. I quickly remembered I spurred the moment the last time we talked. I think I liked her but now that my wife could be back I didn't know what to make of all this. I didn't know what she wanted now but I would find out soon enough.

"I was feeling lonely in that room they gave me" she said.

There was no seat in the room, so she joined me on the bed. We smiled and laughed as we talked about things to take our mind of everything. Not long I found her in my arms and there she stayed as we both silently gazed at the roof. Feelings had started to grow. It wasn't intended but I was becoming attached and that was dangerous.

Then she stood up and asked to leave. We kissed and she left.

I knew this story would not have a happy ending, but we would have to watch it play out to find out.

I closed my eyes in sleep.

THE CIVIL WAR**EPISODE 10 - SET BACKS**

“Dike we need to talk”. This was Agu with a soft grip on my shoulder. I took a faint step backwards as the rockets bearing my thoughts flew into outer space. Does he know I am hiding something? I took a seat. The wooden chairs surrounding the very long table were the only occupants of the conference room.

“What is the matter” I said, my face doing the opposite as my unusually placed chin gave away my attempt to look innocent.

“Dike, I noticed you haven’t been yourself lately, what’s going on?” Agu wanted an answer, I just wasn’t sure I should give him.

“What are you trying to say Agu?”

“Do I look okay to you?” I shouted as I sprang to my feet. I was fuming. I knew this was total overreaction to the question Agu asked but I was ready to go to great lengths to conceal this from everyone.

“I am going through a lot right now, it would be best if you stay out of my business” I said walking towards the door. With a strong grip I pulled the door and shut it as someone who wanted to break it down. Just outside the door I looked up and saw that all other eyes staring at me. They probably heard us talking inside the conference room.

“I just need to be alone right now” those were the only words that made way out of my mouth. I left the base to find somewhere serene to cool off. Just outside the base I stood waiting for an empty commercial motorcycle, *okada* as they are called. I could feel the heat of the sun rays as they touched my skin. I was sweating after few minutes and waved my hands in relief when I saw an empty *okada* approaching.

“Where you dey go Oga?” he asked. His hands were still raising the throttle. The engine revved like a singer struggling with cough and catarrh, although this *okada* rider seemed to be happy with all this noise but it wasn’t in anyway appeasing my spirit.

“Cool this thing na” I said revealing an obvious frown.

“Take me to any sharp pub you know” I said with a little bit of comfort just after the *okada* man released the throttle.

“pumb...pub, Oga me I no sabi dat one o” he said turning his head his head around in confusion

“I mean any bar, joint”

“Oh, na now u dey talk, oya enter make we dey go” I mounted the bike like a horse rider. It was certain the bike man was lacking in his understanding of English but he measured up in his driving skills. He drifted with precision and could discern the tiniest openings to take.

He dropped me at a restaurant and zoomed off after I paid him his money.

Hmmm! my face wore large wrinkles as the stench from pub met my nose. I coughed repeatedly as I walked inside, the smell from smoke and alcohol made me feel uneasy. I was beginning to wonder why I thought a bar would be somewhere serene, obviously I wasn't thinking straight.

"What can I get you sir" a young waitress walked up to me.

"A b-be..." my eyes were lost somewhere between her revealed cleavage and her exposed legs. My mind had wandered off far away from my body. There were no thoughts lining up in my head only one. How can a waitress be dressed like this, like a whore?

"Sir, I didn't get you"

"Oh sorry, a beer would do" I was knocked back to consciousness. In no time I was lost in thoughts again. I had bigger problems on my hands. Sometimes I would wonder if I was most affected by this war or I just had a heap of bad luck. I have to gain their trust for them to be willing to go on this mission with me. I needed to give an explanation.

"Sir your drink" the waitress said, as she popped open the beer with a bottle opener.

"Four hundred and fifty naira sir" she said.

I reached for my wallet and gave her a 500 naira note.

"Keep the change" I said.

She walked away without saying anything. I was expecting a traditional thank you but she seemed to be in no way gratified by my gentlemanly gesture. I poured myself a cup of the beer. My taste buds were agitated; I tapped my head in futile attempt to decrease its intoxicating effects. I wasn't a fan of alcohol; I seldom took it mainly because I detested the side effects it offered and its addictive property.

I was glued to my chair, hours passed. I hadn't even taken another sip of my drink. After few more minutes I headed back for the base. I stopped a cab as I couldn't get any bike around.

"Take me to Afikpo Street"

"Ok sir" the driver said. He didn't look at me. He just started driving. I looked through the closed window glasses and enjoyed the view, it wasn't a pleasant sight but I it kept my mind off my immediate problems.

"Driver you just passed my bus stop, where are you going to?" I said, with anxiety rapidly building.

"Driver stop this car, stop this car" I shouted banging the car door with a lot of force. He didn't even flinch. I couldn't attack him, the car was on high speed and any mistake could get us both killed.

"Where are you taking me to?" I asked. I knew he wouldn't answer but I still asked. The doors were shut and I couldn't jump out even if I wanted to.

“Dike, just cooperate and no one gets hurt” he said. I kept turning sideways, like I was looking for something, my legs were shaking and soon my whole body joined in the rhythm. I was breathing heavily and still trying to think of a way out of this mess. It seemed as though anywhere I went the trouble just kept following me there.

The driver took a right turn down an alley. It was really quiet and looked abandoned as there were no residents around. He drove into a warehouse and stopped.

I ducked as the glass showered on me. I raised my head up hoping to get a look of where I was but suddenly an oncoming fist attacked me. my jaw retracted as my neck took several cracks. Everything now was blurry, the sour taste of my blood in my mouth and the ringing sounds in my head were all that I could perceive as my body fell without control down to the back seats. My eyes couldn't carry itself, everything went blank.

I sprang in consciousness as loads of water blasted my face.

“We will not harm you, we just want to know what is hidden in the university and where exactly it is”

I was still trying to regain my senses. I have been kidnapped but who are these people? I had no time to think. These men looked very desperate and wanted an answer. Why is everyone so interested in what may be in the university? Is it that important? I had so many possible theories for all this. I didn't know which one it was.

“Who are you people, and what do you want from me?” I begged.

“We know you have the location, just answer the question” the man shouted. He was looked very huge and I remembered the smell from dirty socks anytime he advanced very close to me. He didn't fail to deal me heavy punches as I stalled.

“Answer the question” he shouted again just after dealing another heavy blow.

“I don't know what it is, but I just know it is in the university”

“I was ambushed the same day and they took the USB drive” I said.

I had no idea who this people were. I had no idea how many people knew I had the flash drive. This people obviously had connections really high up in the force. This war wasn't going to end, because we don't know yet how many fighters we're dealing with. These thoughts filled my mind as I kept mute and try to save some strength.

“I hope you're saying the truth, save your strength because you'll be needing it” the man said walking out of the warehouse now.

My stomach rumbled with loud grunts, my hands were weakened by the tight grip of the ropes that held me bound. I prayed in my heart that Agu and the rest would try to find me before something bad happens. I had a mission to carry out but there was very little I can do from here. I had to find a way to escape from my captors. It wouldn't be easy but I had to try anyway.

Ah! My head hurts.

THE CIVIL WAR

EPISODE 11 - FAMILY

I could faintly hear the screeching of tires. Probably a car had just parked outside and someone would be coming. I felt frail like my weight was too heavy for me to carry. My head still ached from the severe blows it had received. My stomach grumbled in insatiable thirst for food, they were far too mean to spare me the luxury of a meal. I prayed in my heart hoping the rest would find me. I wasn't ready to lose everything just now. Now when there was the slightest hope that I could see my family again.

I continued wallowing in my thoughts as I laid helplessly on the ground, my hands still held tightly together. A man walked in. I couldn't see his face clearly but my view brightened as he came closer.

"Mr Dike, we meet again" the man said. He wore a black suit and red tie. I could sense he was educated from the manner of his expression. *We meet again?* I began to wonder what he actually meant to say. I took a purposeful look at his face hoping to arouse some familiarity, but there was still nothing. I wasn't sure if I had seen this face before, but I was certain he knew who I was.

"Who are you? What do you want?" I asked angrily moving my body in an attempt to get on my feet. In quick succession a momentous fist met my jaw. A tooth accompanied with blood splash came flying out of my mouth. I was returned to dizziness momentarily. After staggering for a while I helped myself to my feet and looked up facing him.

"What do you want from me?" I asked again, this time with a less provoking tone. I wasn't ready to risk taking another blow.

"Come" he said waving his hands gently towards himself. He walked up to a chair and sat down. There was another chair opposite it with a table between them. I walked to the empty chair and slowly sat down.

"I know you are troubled and angry, am sorry about that"

"But we are what we are because of family, and we can become anything for family" he said, focusing a stern gaze at me.

Then it all came to me.

It was a long time ago, when I turned 18. I had just gotten the news of my admission into the university and my father was overwhelmed with joy. He threw a little party at our house. I and Kesse were in the parlor discussing trivial matters. The rest of the visitors were at the dining table eating. We all were happy and grateful to God for how our lives were turning out. Then there was a knock on the door.

"Dike get the door" my father said. I stood up from my seat and went towards the door. I was shocked to my bones at what I saw. A man holding a gun in his hand stared down at me.

"Where is your father?" he shouted. Cold shivers trickled down my spine, I couldn't move a muscle. My dad decided to find out why I had been staring at the door as someone who had seen a ghost.

Bang! My dad fell to the ground as the man sent a bullet down his chest.

“We are what we are because of family, and we can become anything for family” he said to me.

I had since that day wondered why all that had happened but today I would have my answers.

“You remember me now don’t you” he said with a sinister smile.

“Why did you kill my father?” I fumed with anger. Buried emotions from my past were all resurfacing.

“That’s not the problem now you see” he said, adjusting himself

“You won’t like for what happened to you to be the fate of your son, so you would do as I say”. He said.

My hatred and anger grew by the second. I hated the fact the he reminded me of something I have tried so hard my whole life to forget and I was angry that he was right in front of me and I couldn’t do anything, not then not now.

“What do you want from me?” I asked.

“I left a little trail for you CIA friends so in a few minutes they would come looking for you”

“When you retrieve what is in the university, you bring it to me”

“I’ll be in touch, I’ll be watching” he said. He stood up hastily and signaled all the men, as they followed him immediately. They were gone in few minutes. I sat there on my seat hoping the next faces I would see were those of my friends.

I heard sirens, the warehouse door was opened, I saw Agu walk in. I sighed with relief, everything went blank, I passed out.

“Dike, dike” a voice sounded my name faintly. I opened my eyes gently and saw a face staring down at me. It was Amaka’s. I mustered little strength at sat down on the bed. It was the infirmary and Amaka was sitting right beside me.

“How are you feeling?” she asked. I could see the worry in her eyes. I knew everyone would be worried but I was more worried than ever. I had many people on my tail; my family was caught up in all this mess. I had to fix this as soon as possible.

“I’m feeling much better” I said. My stomach gave a loud grunt and I laughed, she laughed too.

“I’m sorry for walking out on you guys. I know it’s difficult for everyone and all but we have to work together if we want to win” I said. Agu walked in. He looked sober, was he blaming himself for all this? it was certainly my fault and I was wrong to just walk out the way I did.

“Agu, I’m very sorry for how I behaved. I was really disturbed by everything happening and I just freaked out” I said.

“You don’t have to be” Agu replied moving closer to my bed.

"I know what you're going through and sometimes we just have to let those feelings out, so if there's anything you need to talk about we are always here for you" he said, with a soft grip on my shoulder.

"Uhm, actually there's something –"

"Agu turn on the news" Udemba jumped in. It sounded like something urgent. Agu picked up the remote and changed the channel. It was the network news and what we saw was rather upsetting.

"We have a live broadcast message from an unknown source" the anchor said. The video began playing in the background.

"We have something the government wants and we want to negotiate" he said. I turned off the TV.

"What does this mean Dike?" Agu asked me.

"I think they might have found it" I said.

"I have to go see Uche, get some more rest we would survive this" Agu said. He left the room.

"let me get something for you to eat" Amaka said.

I was afraid now than ever. I didn't know what to do. I would have to tell the team about my present problem. The thought of seeing my family again was my only motivation.

I would get through this, for family.

THE CIVIL WAR**EPISODE 12 - CONFERENCE**

“We are outmanned, we need backup. Isn’t there something you can do about that?” I walked in on Agu and Uche discussing in the conference room.

“Oh Dike, hope you are feeling better now” Uche said immediately he saw me.

“Yes I am.” was my reply.

I wondered what they were discussing and why they stopped as soon as they saw me. *It’s probably nothing.* I thought to myself. They didn’t go on with the discussion, they just kept staring.

“I came to see you Agu, I have something to say” I said breaking the silence. I took a seat, they were also seated.

“I have been hiding something from everyone” I said. The air around tensed up a little, from the look on their faces I knew they couldn’t wait to hear what I had to say.

“I’m in trouble” I said with my face down. I sensed this would send different thoughts flying down their minds, I planned to clear the air as soon as I could.

“What’s the problem?” Agu asked looking concerned.

“My family may still be alive.” I said. They both paused. I didn’t stop to read the expressions on their faces, I just kept talking.

“Back in Lagos, before I went to retrieve the USB drive I got a call from Jega--

“Jega” they shouted in unison. Their wide gapes sent down the right message.

“I know, I was surprised too” I said.

“Jega told me he had my family, and I could only see them again if I found what was in the university and brought it to him” I said.

“How are you sure he isn’t lying about your wife and kid? We saw them get shot. They fell and went cold right in front of us. Wha---”

“I heard her voice Agu. She talked to me. She needs me” I said trying to hold back any display of emotions.

“We’ll help her. We take some troops, go to Mogabi and get them” Uche suggested.

“No, am afraid we can’t do that” I stopped them.

“Why not?” Agu asked.

“There is still more I need to tell.” I replied.

"I saw the man who killed my father"

"How? Where? I thought your dad died when you were 18." Agu said.

"He was the one who kidnapped me." I could feel the tension in their expressions. They were probably wondering how I could be hiding so much from them.

"He also wants what is in the University." I said.

"I don't know why everyone is so concerned with this thing and the government is not saying anything about it. I think this thing might be our main problem, but how do we solve this?" Uche asked rhetorically.

I was trying to analyze all the information we had gathered so far to find the best possible solution to our problem. Our hands were tied as this wasn't sanctioned. We had to be careful not to break any rules and if things went south we wouldn't have any backup. I still had to do something no matter what.

"I think I know a way we can save your family" Uche said after a deliberating a while.

"Since no one knows what is in the university, we can trick Jega and get your family out"

"That's risky, a lot could go wrong" Agu said.

"That's our only option right now." Uche said. He turned to me and held my hand.

"Since this is your fight, we can only go ahead if you consent" he said.

This was a tough decision for me. It was too risky but I couldn't sit back and do nothing. I would have to at least try.

"Yes let's do it. Let's save my family" I said.

"Sir, there is a call for you" a young man said walking hastily towards us.

"Who is it?" Uche asked

"It's the Director of the CIA" he said. Uche sprang to his feet instantly. He seemed restless. I wouldn't blame him. Anyone would be thrown off balance by this situation. It wasn't every day you receive direct calls from the Director of the CIA. Uche took the call and all that followed where continuous chanting of *Yes Sir* by Uche. He dropped the call but he didn't look the same. I could sense something was wrong.

"Am afraid we can't save your family"

"We have been assigned to a mission, meet me in 10 minutes for briefing" Uche said walking out of the conference room.

I sat down in my room trying to run through all this in my mind. The government wants us to retrieve what was in the university, project X as they called it. I knew Uche didn't plan for this but he can't go against orders. I wasn't surprised that the government didn't care about my family's life, they were

selfish and are the real reason this war hasn't ended. *But there are others who want this too*, I thought to myself. I was very sure they all would be making plans to retrieve this item also. *I need to come up with something, and I need to do it fast.*

"Dike, are you there" I recognized the voice, it was Amaka's.

"Amaka come in" I said. She did so but stopped in front of the door.

"I wanted to tell you that I would be leaving Enugu tomorrow"

"Why?" I asked with surprise for her decision.

"I just have to; don't try to talk me out of it." She said. She came closer and gave me a kiss on my cheek. I held her hands and looked into her eyes.

"Thank you, for everything" I said. She nodded in acceptance.

With a smile on her face she walked out of the room. Little did I know it was the last time I would be seeing her ever again.

THE CIVIL WAR

EPISODE 13 - WARS NEVER END

I geared up, holstering my gun. The government sanctioned the mission; I wished they had done so before now. I was still bothered about the instructions Uche gave. *"The mission is to find and destroy ProjectX"* Uche said during the briefing.

"Dike, are you sure you are fit to be on this mission?" Uche asked. I knew he was concerned about my well being but anyone in my shoes would have no choice but to try.

Our car engines revved as we swarmed out of the base fully equipped with our best artilleries. This was the largest mission we had ever embarked on.

"Dike what's your plan?" Agu asked me as we journeyed to the university. Udemba was driving, still with a cigarette his mouth. Our black SUV with tinted glasses was the third vehicle in the convoy, behind the Toyota truck and Uche's car. The commoners just gazed with anxiety and fear as we passed their roads, we had to avoid major roads in order to bag the element of surprise.

I had a plan, I had already set it in motion, they just didn't know it yet. Our instructions were to destroy the package but it seemed everyone wanted to have possession of it, Jega seemed like the most desperate.

"I called Jega" I said, waiting to see their displeasure.

"You did what? Why did you? I'm sure he is aware of our plans." Agu said with a wide frown and continuous sighing.

"Dike stop doing things without telling us. We are all in this together" Agu said. He sat at the front and had to continue turning around anytime he wanted to talk.

"Together?" I said with a scornful laugh.

"This is my problem, mine. I'm not ready to risk another life for this" I replied him. I felt a sudden overwhelming feeling of depression feeling an overwhelming depression. I looked outside the window hoping that the view would help take my mind off the fact that I would be taking on a very big risk today.

I jerked forward as Udemba pulled over abruptly. He turned around facing me and pointing his index finger towards me whilst stroking it.

"This is our fight too. Yes, we are in this together." He said with a worrisome smile on his face.

A clean smile landed on my face. After family, this friendship was the next dearest thing to me. They were my second family.

"There's no problem sir, we will be right behind you" Agu was talking to someone on the phone. I assumed it would be Uche, wanting to know the reason why we stopped. We were back on the trail in no time. Now we were two vehicles behind our previous position..

After an hour we arrived. The main gate was desolated. The large signboard that read *Welcome to the University of Nigeria Nsukka* had broken into fractions. It looked deserted-and it actually was. All the vehicles halted and made way for us to move to the front. I was the only one who knew where it was.

I knew it would be underground, and the most renowned underground lair could be found in the University Library's underground basement.

"*The basement that's where it is.*" I said over the radio, with Uche on the receiving end.

Udemba zoomed off instantly with the other vehicles coming behind. I felt something was not right. I didn't see anything with life around. Everywhere was unnervingly empty and quiet.

"We'll stop here" I said over the radio, our car just few blocks away from the library. Udemba pulled over. We noiselessly got out, ducking our heads to avoid being seen or attacked.

"Secure the perimeter, Dike you're with me." Agu said, swaying his fingers in code signal. I affirmed with a nod, and was following him now, walking into the library. There was no one around. I suspected it could be an ambush, but I ditched the thoughts when nothing happened with the next fifteen month.

"Let's go!" Agu shouted.

Then I heard a blast, and another. The whole place had been rigged with bombs. I took the blueprints and with few strokes on my keyboard I got its actual position.

"Dike what's your status, do you have package's location" It was Uche through the walkie-talkie,

"Positive, I repeat Positive sir. Currently progressing to destroy package" I replied. Agu looked at me with a deep smile. "You're a genius" he said. I wasn't a genius technically or biologically but I understood the message he was sending.

"Let's go" I said to him.

The gunshots and firing continued. We were being held in crossfire by people we didn't even know who they were.

I stopped. Not intentionally, as there was a gun pointing to my head.

"Move quietly" he said, coming out of the corner.

"Dike!" Agu shouted planning to draw his gun.

"Stop! Put the weapon down or I kill him and his family" Jega said. Agu slowly did so.

Jega was a smart man, but we were going to need to outsmart him that day.

"Where are my wife and kid?" I asked, trying not to make sudden movements.

"Let's go see them." He said, leading the way. I began to get confused as he was going in the direction of ProjectX.

"What's in there?" I asked, we were at the door.

“Oh, you mean you don’t know?” he said laughing sarcastically still pointing the gun at me.

“So you would risk your life for people who cannot even trust you with their secrets.” He said.

“Are you going to tell me or not?” I asked again, hoping that he knew what it was.

“It’s a kill switch, a detonator.”

“The Nigerian government in alliance with the American government few years ago embarked on a mission to plant bombs at different strategic places in the world” he said.

“France, Germany, Russia all of them have bombs planted at federal buildings and this detonator was the switch. Once it is used there will be an all out war, World War3 would become a reality” he said smiling a little.

“How can anyone want this?” I asked. “What would they stand to gain from the death of billions of people?” I further asked.

Jega opened the door.

“Valerie, Junior” I couldn’t believe my eyes. I saw my wife and son held by men in masks, standing right in front of me. Tears made their way down my cheeks as I was blown away.

“I thought you were dead, I saw you die” I said amidst tears.

“No, Hun, I’m here. I’m still alive” she said holding our little boy and nursing tears in her eyes.

My sorrow transformed into rage.

“Jega what do you want from me” I asked angrily.

“Look” he said, pointing towards something in the middle of the room. I was distracted by my wife and child I didn’t notice there was something in the room. It was ProjectX.

“Take it. What are you waiting for? I thought this is what you wanted.” I said to him.

“Oh you think am a fool. Well, that’s why you are here” he said.

Jega was smart. He knew the security system would be triggered if I tried to take it. He didn’t let Agu into the room, so I had no backup. His men in masks held my wife and child tightly with guns in their hands. I couldn’t do anything; any mistake could cost me everything.

Bang! It was a gunshot. I ducked by instinct in an attempt to protect myself. One of the masked men was shooting another. And with three successive shots, he had killed all the men in the room.

Bang! This one went flying through Jega’s chest. I wanted to see who this masked man was and thank him greatly for saving me.

He removed his mask.

Alas! It wasn’t a man.

“Amaka” I said, opening my mouth in amazement.

“Dike” she said, heaving a sigh of relief.

“I thought you said you were leaving”

“I was, but this was Uche’s plan all along”

“Not telling you made it easier” she said.

I turned to my wife, who was already coming towards me.

“Valerie I---” she stopped me, her lips meeting mine. I remembered the taste like it was yesterday we took our vows down the aisle. I wrapped my hands tightly around her and felt safe.

“*Beep Beep Self Destruct in 30 seconds*” a computerized voice spoke.

Our reunion was short-lived. I took them by the hand and hurried out. The building went blazing in 30 but we already made it out.

The Civil War? I didn’t care much any longer if it still lasted, but what I cared most about was those dearest to me and I wasn’t going to let them out of my sight ever again.

I quit my job at the CIA, I guess that was the reason all this had happened to them in the first place. I could see now that the wars to be fought are not just that of the country, they are everywhere, every day, every time. The fight against good and evil was an endless cycle.

I am a brave man as they say. I didn’t stop fighting, I only changed my fight.

I fight now to protect. Not for the government this time.

This time, I fight for my family.

THE END