
DRIVEN!

A short story by M.A Meryn

Cover illustration by Elizabeth Akamo

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Driven!

'Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Murtala Muhammad International Airport, Lagos; local time is eight pm and temperature, thirty-three degrees centigrade. Please remain seated until the aircraft has come to a complete stop and the fasten-seat belt signs switch off.'

Heidi was in a window seat looking outside, Sam in the seat beside her. Both in their thirties, she was a beauty therapist and Sam was a fitness instructor.

'Dad, Paul and Paulina will be surprised to see us' said Sam.

'Why would your dad be surprised? He knows we're coming even if the twins don't' Heidi replied.

'Yes, but he's expecting us on Sunday night, not today; I didn't tell him we changed our flight' said Sam.

'Why didn't you?'

'He insisted on coming to Lagos to pick us from the airport on Sunday night, but I'd rather he didn't stress himself; he's old and it's a DRIVEN! long way to travel' he replied.

'So who's meeting us at the airport?' Heidi asked, putting the Cartier wristwatches and Giorgio perfumes she bought DRIVEN! on-board, for her in-laws, into her bag.

'We'll take a local flight DRIVEN! to Benin and get a taxi home DRIVEN! That's what Mom and I did the last time I came to Nigeria--'

'Pity I never met your Mom; I wish we made this trip last year' she replied.

'That's life,' he said, and shrugged.

They disembarked, collected their luggage and went to the domestic wing,

'Flights to Benin City are DRIVEN! suspended because their tarmac is undergoing repairs' said an attendant at the information desk.

'What shall we do?' Heidi asked on their way out of the domestic terminal building.

'We'll hire an airport taxi,' he replied, and they headed for the taxi rank.

When they reached the taxi rank a burly middle-aged man wearing a baseball cap, trainers, Bermuda DRIVEN! shorts and T-Shirt approached them; he was pot-bellied, had a moustache, and was little over five feet tall.

'You need a taxi? I'm next in the queue,' he said, showing them his identity card.

'We're going to Benin; how much will DRIVEN! it cost?' Sam asked.

'Lagos to DRIVEN! Benin is four hours or more depending on Friday traffic before the tollgate, and this is night; if you pay two hundred thousand naira I can take you,' the taxi driver replied.

'That's fine' said Sam.

The driver led them DRIVEN! to a DRIVEN! black DRIVEN! Honda Accord, helped them to put their luggage in the boot and they left the airport. There was an upright silver cross stuck on the dashboard and a rosary DRIVEN! hanging from the driver's rear view mirror above it.

DRIVEN!

'My name is Sam, and this is Heidi; what's your name?'

'I'm Dennis,' replied the driver, turning on the air-conditioning. 'Where in Benin are you going?'

'Eden Mansion, on Macaulay Street; I'll direct you when we get to Benin' Sam replied.

'I'm a Bini man although I lives in Lagos ... I knows Eden Mansion, Chief Richard's house; everybody does,' said Dennis, 'Chief is a very kind and genero--'

'I'm his first child,' Sam interrupted him.

'Really! I'm happy to knows you,' replied Dennis, adjusting his rear view mirror and looking at Sam and Heidi. 'Are you husband and wife?'

'Yes, we've been married for two years' he answered.

The traffic ahead was congested and horns were blaring as they came to a stop at a roundabout; hawkers were running between the vehicles, selling different snacks, drinks, videos, jewellery and other items to commuters.

One boy DRIVEN! approached them, hawking music tapes and CDs; Dennis lowered his window, 'Bring Best of Bob Marley,' he said, and collected it from the boy, 'How much?' he asked, and began haggling with him. The traffic started moving again and the boy was running alongside their taxi, Dennis hurriedly took some money out of his ashtray and passed it to him.

Sam was pointing out different landmarks to Heidi along their way.

DRIVEN

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