

# The Making of Viru

Memoirs of High School

*No Vanacula*

SS2b- B for Best

*A-Art Class*

*B-Brilliant*

*C-Champion*

*D-Dull*

*E-Excellent*

*F-Fail*



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COVER DESIGN BY AIKI DAMILOLA

# THE MAKING OF VIRU: Memoirs of High School

## Author's Note

I was taught in my industrial psychology class that humans are products of nature and nurture. Nature, the natural factor of your DNA, physical and mental traits handed down to you by your parents. Nurture, the way the environment fine tune who you are and help define you as a unique individual.

Nature wise, I got the cool genes from my parents, calm, cool headedness. But in all humans there is the streak of ruthlessness, an evolutionary requirement for us to survive in a tough world as specie. My environment nurtured that.

I grew up in a protected home. The "get inside" kind of childhood. I and my siblings never really got to learn how the real world worked; we didn't mix except with a big house library where we retired to every day after school.

That changed for me when I entered secondary school, Oke Ibadan Boys High School. The school was and still is a very notorious place to be and I still wonder how my folks allowed me to go there given than my other siblings attended very responsible government secondary schools and private schools.

OBHS was a huge leap for me, like going for swimming lessons for the first time and being thrown into the 15 feet end.

I survived, physically, but my life was changed forever. For good or for bad, only posterity will be able to judge that. This e-book is a collection of some of my experiences in the school, the memoirs of Viru, originally posted on Facebook before being compiled into an e-book.

I hope you have a wonderful time reading it and if it makes you chuckle once or twice, collect a bottle of Fanta in my name.

PS: Viru, my alter ego, is the person I am but home training and plenty factory resetting slaps from Mrs Aiki won't allow me to be.

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## Dedication

This ebook is dedicated to the Fanta bottles that laid down their lives for this work to finally see the light of day. You guys are life savers, heroes. You are the real MVPs.

Episode 01

## GENESIS

My dad smiled down knowingly at me as I hesitated before stepping through the yawning mouth of the school gate.

Viru goes to school. Hell, Viru goes to hell would have been a more apt caption.

Welcome to Oke Ibadan Boys High School, the signpost beside the school gate read.

I should have known all was not well in Utopia when the teacher registering new students asked my dad why I was in that school. That I looked too frail and "ajebutter" for the school.

That was the part I should have said "Fada if only you will pass this cup over me" But I didn't. I registered and my life changed. I was assigned to JSS 1F, along with almost 70 other odd souls.

OBHS is a huge school, bigger than some higher institutions. But what it had in space, it lacked in basic amenities and infrastructure.

My first sight of my class had me cringing back in horror. It was the last room in a block of about 10 classrooms. One side of the classrooms served as the school fence, with barred windows to prevent us from skipping out of school through the windows.

There was a small space between the end of the classroom and another side of the school fence. This space served as a make shift urinal. From time to time ammonia from the pee of almost a thousand students would waft into our class.

A lot of us were fat. Not from eating well, but from the gas we inhaled everyday. The stench made our classroom a gulag of sorts for the teachers and they avoided it as much as possible.

Of course I wasn't one of the lucky fat ones, it has been scientifically proven that it will take a miracle of the immaculate conception kind to make me fat.

The classroom itself boasted of a long black board with deep cracks peppered on its face like the tribal marks of a typical Ibadan man. You know those with faces like someone that had a run in with a pride of lions. Faces with tribal marks originating from somewhere in the middle of their skulls and meeting at the chin.

The classroom floor was pitted with craters. It looked like a miniature version of the surface of the moon. And there were no seats!

Yeah, no seats. We all had to find space on the bare floor to ease our feet whenever we got tired of standing. I guess that was why the person that selected the school's uniform picked a sand colored short with the same sand colored checkered shirts to flow. Such a very wise man.

You won't know the difference between the color of the uniform and the dirt you pick up while seating on the floor.

Except it's rainy season when the floor gets flooded with rain flowing in freely from the roof that was practically a giant sieve. Then our uniform absorbed the brown of mud.

But as Nigerians na, we learnt the art of making the best of what we have. We found broken pieces of old school chairs and desks and lay them on the floor as our seats.



If you were able to get the seat section of a broken chair without the legs or the back rest, then you were a boss. You could command people to stand up from your plank if they refused to go on errands for you.

Owning a plank with your name written on it in capital letters was no guarantee that you get to keep it. You might come to school one morning and find that your piece of plank real estate has been kidnapped by invaders from other classes.

Most first periods were spent searching for missing planks. And when you find yours, say three classes away, you have to fight for it to get it back. You go back to your class and call on the hefty ones there to come fight your battle with you.

With my scrawny, tiny frame, the heavens knew I wasn't made for that shit. Yet my village people would keep pushing me to fight battles that weren't my own.

Till one good day, a classmate of mine, Tosin, got robbed off his seat by a dude from JSS 1G. He came to the class to call on people to help him reclaim his stolen property.

And I followed. Looking back at it, that was one of the dumbest thing I have done in this life. Me that breeze from passing vehicles use to blow off the road. If a heavy truck is passing, I hold onto the nearest heavy object to avoid being blown away like paper.

We got to the class and in standard Ibadan version, we started raining curses and abuses at each other while doing a tug of war with the plank serving as the rope. The whole class was pulling from one end, we were pulling from the other.

Then I got my first sight of what a street fight looks like.

A dude from the other side picked another plank- the back rest of a chair- and swung it at us in a bid to make us drop our end of the seat. I was close to the front, but when I saw the wildly swinging stick coming nearer, I stepped away.

This particular battle isn't mine, it is of the Lord.

Before we could say Agbalumo, I heard a loud thunk!

The stick had made contact with Tosin's head. Blood started spurting out like a burst pipe.

Right there and then, I pulled my famous disappearing act and vanished from the scene. It is just a plank sah, it is not worth dying for.

That was the first of many bloody stick fights I witnessed.

Lesson Learnt

He lives to fight another day, he who fights and run.

Episode 02

Gulag

Break time was always crazy season. We'll have a couple of thousand students swamping the food sellers, each hustling to be served first before food finishes.

Fights used to break out as often as Lai tells lies.

The food stand was situated some distance from the classes, so a frequent sight was seeing people Usain Bolt out of the class immediately the bells go off. Some wouldn't bother to wait for bells before they move. It was survival of the fastest and the fittest.

Close to my classroom though, was a hole-in-the-wall all stop shop. Call it our Wall-Mart, you could get anything you want from here. Being close to the urinal, the teachers declared the shop out of bound for health reasons. But that didn't stop us from getting what we wanted from there. From time to time you would find students bent over and making their purchases from the woman at the other side.

Our favourite meal then was 'eree' which translates loosely to 'soaked'. Eree is garri soaked inside the transparent white nylon bags.

One naira water, three naira garri, one naira sugar, open the nylon the water was packaged in, pour the garri and sugar, tie up the nylon and shake vigorously, there you have it, eree at its best.

We ate the life out of it. If you could afford groundnuts, mehn you were a baller. You'll see boys strolling around sucking their meals from nylons without a care in the world.

In other unrelated news, it's been proved by science that Oke Ibadan boys are the best suckers in the world. Make whatever you like from this ☹

Eree was a good weapon too, throw it at your opponent's face, the nylon would burst and splatter into eyes and nostrils, disorienting your opponent long enough for someone like me to make a run for it or attack if you are the fighting type.

There was a task force of students appointed by teachers to stop us from patronizing the shop. If you were caught you would be dragged to the staff room for special attention or you forfeit your precious purchases to the task force. Corruption didn't start today you know.

The peculiar sitting of my classroom, close to Urineville, and the fact that the same set of teachers were tasked with teaching classes A to H (each with about 100 kids), meant that we rarely had teachers in our class. Most dropped in for about five minutes to give rushed explanations of the notes we were always being instructed to copy from other classes.

None ever lasted more than 10 minutes. The stench from the urinal always sends them out. Weaklings, tueh.

We the students that stayed there 8 to 4 pm, did we have 2 heads? In truth though, we rarely perceived it, we acclimatized well. The stench of ammonia became like air freshener to us. The regular absence of teachers in our class made the place a lawless land. Teachers only entered the place when they need to take out their life frustrations on our sorry asses.

One barger that was denied a rumble in the hay by his wife would just enter school and say 'This life is just a bag of beans, konji is a baskard fa. This pent up kini is not good for the body, who are the unfortunate beings that will be at the receiving end.'

Elo sah! Here we are, JSS 1 F. Can you cum and do us?

What am I saying? It's like those people got sexual release from the ways they took pleasure in flogging us. BDSM much.

"JSS 1 F! All of you come outside one by one."

Next thing you hear tuai tuai tuai tuai tuai! Is this life a battle ground? I was not made for this.

To save the whole class from this suffering, the class captain would write names of noise makers.

These unfortunate beings served as the sacrificial sheep to suffer for the sin of all.

Most times than not, my name would top the list. I was a rough, unruly rascal. Rough play, acting out action movies and pranks were my thing.

Anytime the teacher that needed release for the day entered the class to minister unto to us, I'll pull my invisibility cloak on and vamoose. The art of making myself scarce when shit was about to hit the fan was one I truly excelled at. Being tiny helped a lot too.

"If you hear your name, come outside. Mufutau, Sodiqee, Morufu, Ayo, Sola, Aiki."

"Aiki!"

"Where is that Aiki?"

Pff, Aiki fire. Me that already called forth my inner Edo person and floated out with the wind. Na person soldier see e dey beat fa.

On this particular day, I just had a narrow escape from the class and I was speed walking to get the hell out of Dodge when I heard a voice shout from a class, "That boy! Come! "

Ah God, is today the day I die?

I couldn't run off since I was the only one on the corridor. I turned around and entered, Oga dipped his hand into his pocket, brought out 50 naira and told me to get him pure water and bread.

Oh, ordinary pure water fa.

I collected the money and hurried off to the "wallMart". I needed to get missing fast, no time to go to the official school mart and get anything.

"mama give me pure water and bread"

She did and gave me change. I counted it and saw I was over paid, I turned back and gave her 10 naira that she made a mistake in the change.

I was almost at the class when I realized that I was the one that actually made a mistake. The initial change was correct but my good boy wanted to put me in trouble.

I went back to 'wallMart' but the woman denied totally.

Mama is this how you use to do? Something that hasn't reached 5 minutes and here you are claiming amnesia. Aye le o ibosi o!

I very well couldn't go back to teacher with incomplete change and I couldn't tell him I bought his lunch beside a urinal, so I asked myself, What would Jesus do? (WWJD?)

I didn't get an answer to the question and since time was going I just pocketed the remaining change, carried the bread and water and entered one of the JSS 2 classes. Good luck to the teacher trying to find one random student in the sea of kids.

Lunch was extra good that day I tell you.

Lesson Learnt

Forget the shit they say, honesty doesn't always pay... But sometimes it gets you free lunch.

Episode 03

Warning: if you are eating or get irritated easily, you might want to skip this.

A Shitty Tale.

To the other end of the school fence from my JSS 1 classroom/the urinal was the toilet. A huge space, easily over two acres, with about 5 stalls of pit latrine built close to the school's perimeter wall.

The pit latrines were meant to serve the lot of us but very few had the mind to use it.

Why? Where should I start from, the smell? The shit splattered all over the floor and walls? The incessantly buzzing flies?

The mere thought of using the place would make one constipated. The shit will vex and ask 'bros how far na? Na so you wicked reach? Na me you wan deposit for here? No way sah!'

Capital punishment in the school was being asked to go wash the toilet. Just die already.

The empty plots around the stalls provided ample space for us to do our thing. You'll see boys squatting and gisting while doing their business with their joysticks dangling with abandon.

The place served as a refuse dump as well, with people in the neighborhood perfecting their basketball skills by dunking refuse over the walls. Some would blatantly enter the school after school hours with wheeled barrows to dump their



wastes. The pile of refuse grew over time and gave boys some cover while they do squat.

In time though, the sheer volume of shit being dropped off at the dump literally covered the ground in a carpet of shit. To find your spot, you had to tip toe over deposits of shit like someone passing through a marked mine field. Most times than not, one would end up stepping in shit and unwittingly carry it into the classroom. Remember we sat on the floor, at one time or another your feet are bound to touch someone's shirt or short, then the shit gets transferred for the person to carry home as souvenir.

The toilet provided good hiding places though and if you didn't mind having shit all around you, the toilet was a safe haven. Not just from the whip flexing teachers, but from joyless co students. You didn't have to do much to fall foul of students looking for whom to flex their muscles on. You might chop slap for looking at a random person for too long, you might be made to push a car drawn on the chalk board for seeking refuge in the wrong class.

There was a mango tree in the middle of the toilet space that served me a lot of times. Fact is, people rarely look up for trouble, so I would take off from a bully, get to the foot of the tree and remove my sandals, pull my arms through them and scramble up the tree. The bully would be searching everywhere for me while I nested safely in the highest reaches of the tree branches, calmly reading a novel till school closes.

I spent the major parts of my first two years in school running and hiding, running from teachers and hiding from bullies. The remaining four years I spent hiding and running, hiding from teachers and running from bullies.

In all, I have 6 years working experience in the art of total concealment and rapid dissipation.

There was a day I offended a couple of JSS 3 guys and as usual I headed for the toilet. Most pursuers would get dissuaded by the prospect of a high speed chase through a mine field of shit, but these dudes didn't care at all.

I made the tree a few paces ahead of them. I leapt for the lowest branch and swung myself up. I moved swiftly like a monkey from branch to branch till I got to the top of the tree. Practice they say make perfect.

They saw me climb the tree but couldn't follow me so they stood underneath, waiting for me to come down. When they saw me settle back on my branch and pull out a novel from my pocket, they knew they had a long wait ahead.

But these dudes refused to give up, thinking about it, I wondered what the gravity of my offence could have been to deserve such persistence.

They picked stones and threw them at me. Well they tried but the tree branches deflected them all. I also plucked unripe mangoes and made it rain on them. They were swearing and cursing that if they catch my mother na die.

A stone hit the branch directly below me and I saw something move between the leaves.

Snake!

There I was, 10 feet above the ground, two angry kids waiting to mess me up real good and a snake disturbed from its nap directly underneath me. Kweke!

What will Jesus do?

Fly my man, fly!

I saw the snake move up the tree trunk towards me, right then and there I flew!

Tarzan would have been proud of the way I caught the lowest branch to break my fall.

Immediately I touched dirt, they were on me. I knelt and pleaded but... The less said the better. Let's just say I walked with limps for almost a week after. But Eh, that was definitely better than a face off with a vexed reptile.

Lesson Learnt

When caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, pick the devil. You might get to strike a deal with him, but the sea no dey look Uche face.

Episode 04

Of Football and highway robbers

My school lacked in every way you can think of.

Teachers? Yes boss

Teaching materials? We dey

Chairs and desks? Oh sure.

Roofs? We used glorified sieves.

But it wasn't all that bad really, we had some things in abundance. We had eree, we had expert pickpockets, professional scam artists, daylight robbers and we had football fields.

Apart from the main school football field in front of two adjacent single storey buildings that served the senior secondary, we had large expanses of space we used as fields all over the school.

At the south end of the school, we had like an acre of sandy field in front of the JSS blocks. There was another sandy field in the middle belt where the principal's office and the school library and laboratory buildings were. Immediately behind the senior secondary blocks were open plots with covering of grass. Those were prime spots and generally reserved for the seniors.

Playing on those fields was a daily exercise in chaos. There was no laid out playing field, everyone just enter the open field and set up their goal posts with stones, shoes or school bags.

You often find someone's goal post immediately beside yours with your playing space overlapping theirs. You get to run into each other from time to time, confuse which ball is yours and which belongs to another set of players.

Sometimes you'll see someone dribble the whole team, slot the ball away into an empty goal post and wheel away in celebration only to find out he scored in the wrong goal post.

Ghen Ghen Ghen, won ti gba penalty lo throw in.

We however didn't restrict our footballing to the fields alone. How will we rep the school very well if we kept everything legal and followed the rules.

From time to time, empty classrooms served as football pitches, most especially during school hours. In junior class, there was a hall that used to be an assembly ground when the school was still, well, a school.

But during our time, it had fallen on hard times or maybe it was hard times that fell on it, cos the roof caved in. It was more of a death trap than a hall, with jagged pieces of roofing sheets littering the place and the roofing lumbers pointing accusatory fingers downward like reverse middle fingers.

We were forbidden to enter the place but of course we didn't listen. Most of the floor surface was covered in shit but the raised platform was left clean and that served as our indoor football pitch.

We used the place for 3 aside and 4 aside, depending on the number of people ready to take the risk. We played in sets, with two sets playing while the others await their turns.

Those sets not presently playing would perch by the windows and keep watch for danger. Once we get the signal that a teacher was approaching, we would scamper out of the class via the back window and scatter.

Sometimes though, the lookout would get engrossed with the game and not see a teacher approach till it was too late. Then they get screwed, royally. I always heard tales of those though, never experienced it.

The classroom soccer had its perks but nothing beat playing on the outdoor football pitch after school hours. There you get enough space to play and strut your stuff. Be you a player or a thief. There was space for all.

See, it was a regular occurrence to finish playing football and find your bag or sandal has flown off on gilded wings. The chaotic nature of the field made life easy for these light fingered people. I lost my sandals to them, twice.

The first day was a Friday. I was the goal keeper and my bag and sandals were part of what we used to make the post. How someone got to perform a disappearing act on my sandals right beside me still baffles me.

I got home to get my ass handed to me by my Mom for the missing sandals. Then on Sunday, she got another one for me.

Monday, we waited to play ball after school. My team kept flogging all comers. Then time to go home came and my new sandals were nowhere to be found.

Ah! Death where are you? Ground what are you waiting for? Open up and swallow me. But death and the ground 'slyed' me. I didn't die. I had to go home and explain to my mom how I lost two sandals in two days, while doing exactly what she told me not to ever do, play ball.

Mom was in a forgiving mood that day, she promised to get me another one, after two weeks.

For two weeks, I have to walk to school and back bare footed. Is death or flogging not better than this?

The first day of walking back home barefooted under the hot afternoon sun got me into my WWJD mood.

So I devised a plan. A lot of our church members had stores along the way to my school, I made sure I branched their shops and greeted them when I was going to school and when coming.

The third day Mom bought me a new sandal. Guess she got too many enquiries on why her son was walking to school with no shoes.

Lesson Learnt

You can get anyone to do anything, you just have to know the right thing to blackmail them with.

Episode 05

The Dog Karma

My year in JSS 2 didn't weigh heavily on the scale of 'crazy shii done in school'. One day it was here, the next we were in the final JSS class. Now JSS 3 got stories. Most of them in the 'stories that touch the heart' category.

Our JSS 3 classroom was a big upgrade from the 'groundly' days of the first year. We were almost seniors, so we had rep, at least a little, and seats.

Our classroom was in the middle belt, it was surrounded by open fields, the closest building was some distance away. A large field separated us from the principal office standing opposite us and to the north was block of buildings used as the laboratories. We pretty much had the place to ourselves.

The building itself was a hall like single building used as two classrooms with each class at opposite ends of the building. There was no dividing wall and after the first term the two classes were merged.

Nature despise vacuum, so did we. We promptly turned the vacated classroom into another make shift indoor football pitch.

Apart from football, fighting and stealing, we had some games we played. Three of these games stand out in my memory. 'Name, name, name', 'statue' and 'Name, place, animal and thing'.

'Name, name, name' was a vocal game where the players call the name or type of an item mentioned till someone misses it. Like Name of cars, countries, cities and stuffs.



Statue must have been invented by a sadist. Once you subscribe to the game, you walk around with your fingers crossed. Literally. If another player catches you without your fingers crossed and says 'statue', you freeze. No excuses, no stories. You freeze with food on the way to your mouth, you freeze while writing, you freeze with your mouth open. Or you chop slaps, 5 at least.

'Name, place, animal and thing' was like the written equivalent of "name, name, name." You draw up columns on sheets of paper and title them with Name, place, animal and thing. A column on the sheet is lettered from A to Z. One of the players will call a letter and all players attempt to fill the columns with corresponding values starting with the letter called before the first player says stop.

We played these games anywhere, anytime.

Like one day, during CRS class, I was at the back with two of my guys. Sodiq and Posi, playing 'Name, Animal, Place or Thing'.

The class was a noisy one, our teacher was a new one and female too. Two very serious offences a teacher could commit. We were out to let her know the kind of people she was dealing with.

Little did we know that her village people were whispering in her ears to find scapegoats. They connected with my village people and set their eyes on me. And Sodiq.

She snuck up on us while we were busy writing names of things, animals and people that starts with Q. Very difficult something that one.

Posi sharply deposited his own sheet inside a crack in the wall when she told the three of us to stand up. Only Sodiq and I were left holding incriminating evidence.

She told us to follow her to the staffroom, and like sheep to the slaughter, we did.

See, in this life, be very wary of gentle people. People that don't get angry, yes those ones, fear them!

When we got to the staff room, she told us we'll be getting our first lessons as strip pole dancers. We would hug one of the pillars and dance as we get 50 strokes of cane. Each.

I went first.

I held on to the pillar as the first stroke landed.

Yepa! That singular stroke entered deep inside my soul.

WWJD?

Call on the Father, "Father, if only you will allow this cup pass me over"

I got silence as an answer.

After 30 strokes my cry changed to "Haba Father! Haba! Why o why? Why have you forgotten me in this time of evil"

Then I heard the voice, "You have been measured, your have been weighted and now your cup has runneth over. Chop your beating in peace my son"

So I chopped. And belleful. And my torn back never remained the same.

Lesson Learnt

Karma is a Savage female dog in heat. When the time comes, she will mess you up.



## Episode 06

### Home Run

In my school, going to school early was an offense, coming late was another. You'll form good boy and come early, only for them to rustle you out of your class to pick. You'll do bad boy and come late, they'll hand you cutlass to weed the whole Obasanjo farm. Es sqiz me sah, I am not a farmer, and Its not that over serious is worrying me that's why I came early. I'm in school early to make sure the chair I stole last evening doesn't get re-stolen by early comers.

You had to time your entrance perfectly to the time when the first peals of the bell sounds. Of course you can't be caught hanging outside the school while waiting for the bell. You must be like the men of Issachar in the Bible, masters in the knowledge of timing.

Sometimes when the spirit of earliness come on me, I would enter the school, make my way to my classroom and climb in the ceiling to chill with a novel till assembly starts. No one ever looks up for danger.

There were three classes of students then, the school one students, school two students and school three students.

School one students were the regular kids. Those that enter school and attend classes as at when due.

School two students were those that enter school and were regular in every place but their classrooms.

While school three students, the baba Agbalagbas, would enter school if and when they feel like. Enter class as the spirit leads and find their ways out of the school either through the strategically located holes in the school walls or by simply scaling the fence.

I alternated my allegiance between Ndi school two and school three. I skipped classes almost on a daily basis in school and from time to time I skipped out of school.

There was a gaming center very close to the school where boys used to relocate to from school to chill out while their mates were being forced to learn. But the proximity of the place to the school made it a target for raids from teachers and police men. I never followed them there.

I found a gaming house far enough for comfort where I could play Mortal Kombat and SEGA without fear. I introduced a couple of my school three peeps to the place and I single handedly solved the problem of incessant arrests. St Viru, patron saint of all school three students of OBHS.

Our house that time was about 15 minutes walking distance from the school. It was a hybrid house, a two storey building and a one story building miraculously joined together like Siamese twins. We stayed on the first floor of the two story building.

The front door of the apartment was made of square antique stained glass set in a frame of steel. My brothers and I used the balcony as our playground of sort. We played all sort of games there, counters, paper soccer and football.

There were days in school when we couldn't afford to go play games so we had to look for alternatives. Then an idea came to me. That evening while playing football with my brothers at home, I 'accidentally' broke a strategically located pane of glass. It

was close to the lock of the door. Mom whooped my behind for the broken glass but I took it with a cheerful heart. What kind of patron saint won't be open to taking one for the team.

The following day I told the gang of four that we should go to my place to watch movies once it's break time. They were skeptical about it but I told them all was in place.

So we made our ways to our secret exit point and got out of school. We swapped our school uniforms for house clothes as usual and made for my house. I had a spare key with me since I normally get home first.

I opened the padlock and ushered everyone into my father's house with its many mansions. Closed the door and passed my hand through the hole I made in the glass the previous day and locked the padlock from outside.

Anyone who checked the door would find the padlock perfectly in place and locked. As long as we didn't make too much noise, no one could ever know anyone was in the house. We turned this into a weekly ritual, at least twice a week, we'll go to my place and go on movie watching sprees. NEPA used to make sense those days.

Sometimes we'll cook and turn it into a feast of celebration. Celebration of our freedom from school. Celebration of the evil that was about to befall me.

We had close calls when my mom would come home unexpected. Once we hear footsteps on the staircase, I would run to switch off the socket, another would switch off the ceiling fan while one badass dude would use his hand to stop the rolling fan to stand still. Then we all disappeared. Under the chair. Under the table. Under the bed in the boys bedroom. Sometimes suspended from the ceiling.

Till the day the Shit hit the fan. We were engrossed with The Matrix, screaming as Neo was dodging bullets like cars in Lagos traffic.

Mom barged in like SWAT and silence descended on the apartment like the flames of fire on Pentecost.

This is death. My death.

WWJD? Should I just play dead and resurrect after three days? Na, not with the way my mother was. She would have brought me back to life and find 7 creative ways to kill me herself.

She screamed "Ife! What are you doing here? Who are these people?"

Without waiting for answers, three slaps landed on my face in quick succession. Before I could say Fanta is Bae, all my friends were nowhere to be found. They used my perfected disappearing act on me.

Then I knew exactly how Jesus felt when his disciples had conversations with their heels when the mob came for him.

See, whoever said hell hath no fury like a woman scorned as definitely not met an African mother scorned. Let's just say I saw the pearly gates and St. Peter SMHing for me that day.

That was the last time I had anything to do with those slies. The correcting arms of my mother made sure of that.

Lesson Learnt

Friends are forever, till the shit hits the fan then you know the meaning of OYO.



Episode 07

Bully Town

In the jungle the principal law is survival of the fittest, in my school, your survival is directly proportional to the level of fear you can induce. Bullying was the norm and we had a more or less established hierarchy of predators and prey.

I owned a niche somewhere smack in the middle, I made enough nuisance of myself to make people wary of picking on me. I was involved in fist fights, stick fights, stone fights and once in a knife fight. I wasn't the strongest but I was ruthless. I don't hold back and I don't fight fair. If you need to hit, hit fast and hard, then run.

That's why till this day, I don't do rough play or mock fights, it's all real to me and someone will definitely get hurt. Sometimes bad, once very bad. An eye almost got lost.

But then, it required great wisdom to pick your fights. Some you can go all physical and fight, others you bluff and pray your bluff doesn't get called out. Other times you just turn tail and flee like the devil was on your tail. I excelled in fleeing. You should have seen me in those days, Usain Bolt had nothing on me, I would practically run and leave my poor shadow behind.

The class you are in also went some ways in determining who you can bully. We had class gangs then, the senior classes always picking on the junior. Throughout Junior Secondary, we couldn't wait to get to SS1 so we can get the power that came with being in SS. But our village people had other plans.

The year we got to SS1 (2003) was the year the Oyo State Government in their wisdom decided to split schools up. Oke Ibadan Boys High School was split into three, school 1 had just JSS 1 and 2, school 2 had JSS 1 to 3 while school 3 was the SS class. The schools were administered separately, so instead of having one huge school, we effectively had 3 different schools sharing a compound.

Our hopes of being seniors were dashed. We ended up being the juniors in the new OBHS school 3.

On resumption of the first term, the first administrative duty was to split us into classes. A test was conducted for those of us interested in science. English and Mathematics test.

I passed my English paper well and scored 1 over 10 in the Maths paper. One of the very few to get that score. So, I made it to science class, the genius class, SS 1A.

Those that did relatively well in the English paper were placed in B, the technical class, more or less a pseudo science class. You know, those that are doing science but are not good enough to mix with we the brilliant 1 over 10 scoring big boys of science. Those that fluke the test were shipped off to Art class.

Naturally, an unhealthy rivalry sprung up between SS1 A and B. And I am not talking academic rivalry, hello this is Oke 'Badan I'm talking about, we settle scores with fists, bottles and planks.

As senior students, we got standard desks and chairs at the start of the term but before the end of the first week, Grand Theft Auto (Desk and Chairs edition) was in full flow. Fights followed.

My best friend in the school, Perspective, had a single seater chair and desk combo he brought from home. So he had no need for the government issued seats. But as a real G, he would follow us anytime we go to war over seats.

One day, we came to school to find our chained desk and chair missing, the bastards that did the job were gracious enough to leave our chain and padlock in place, just the desk and chair missing. How they managed to open the padlock without breaking it is a mystery.

But there was no time to waste trying to play Holmes and solve the mystery, the longer your seat is missing the higher the chances are that you will not be able to recover it.

We suited up in our battle gear and started going from class to class to look for our seat. We found it in B and a scuffle ensued. Perspective was dragging the desk, we were almost at the door when someone stepped in and landed him a breath expelling punch in the stomach.

The thing went skrrrrrrri and my nigga slumped on the desk.

Kweke!

That brought an immediate halt to the fighting and everyone paused, wondering if we've finally gotten the first fatal casualty.

Darn, that was too good an opportunity to miss. So I ran to the desk, said a prayer for the soul of the departed and pushed my friend off the desk and dragged it out of the class and into ours. He already took one for the team, no point wasting that golden opportunity.

After what seemed like an eternity, the other guys brought the risen man back to the class. If looks could kill, I should have died that day.

News of his fainting spread around school, to protect his rep, dude went about saying he was only acting so we could get the chair. But then, I know what I saw, my friend saw the pearly gates before he came back.

I marked the face of the dude with the death sentence punch, never in this life or the next will I cross him.

Lesson Learnt

In all your learning, learn wisdom, in all your getting, get understanding. Amem?

Episode 08

Bully Town II: Need For Speed, Most Wanted

I think my village people are from the biblical Issachar, they have the knowledge of time. They are perfect at bidding their time and attacking at the right moment.

During the holidays of SS1 to SS2, my Mom had three pairs of school uniform sewed for me. They were meant to last me for the two years I had left in school. Checkered yellow and white shirts and above the knees shorts.

Enters village people!

We were only one week into the new session when the school dropped the news that the uniform had changed, no more shorts. Senior secondary school students would be wearing trousers.

When I told my mom, she gave me the African mother's death stare. "So I should go and buy a new set of materials for you ba? Manage it, you only have one year left."

One year for where? We are only one week into SS2 first term fa, that's two years of schooling.

But of course I couldn't argue that maths with my mom. The speed with which the students embraced the announcement would make one wonder if they were the ones that sold the idea to the school management. By the following Monday, half of the school was rocking the new trousers, within a month, there was only a handful of short knickered people left. By the start of the second term, I was the sole member of the short knickers association.

The short knickers wasn't all bad news for me. Anytime I skip class and a teacher catches me, I could always claim I was sent on an errand from the Junior School to meet a teacher in the senior school. I had the stature of a junior student, I wore the Knickers used by the Junior School and I wasn't regular in class enough for teachers to recognize me, so it always worked.

The downside was, I was opened to being bullied by students in my level or higher and those in SSS1. Sometimes I got bullied by students in Junior Secondary as there was no school ID card and no one would believe a tiny lad in shorts claiming to be in SSS2.

There was a day while doing the rounds of my constituency in the Junior School, after jumping the window out of the class before the biology teacher got in for notes checking that is, I got mobbed by a gang of JSS 2 boys.

I strolled into their class to blend in, unknowing to me that the class captain already got instructions that the class was to be flogged and no one was to leave. I was there all of five minutes when my inner sensor started telling me to find my way out of the place. I got to the door and a dude leaning on the frame told me to go back.

Hian, Oga I no dey this class I wan comot.

Dude said no, nobody leaves the class.

I told him I was a SSS2 student. He looked me over and called on his guys to come and see joker of the century. The guys knew they were going to be flogged, they were vexed that someone was trying to play smart and escape punishment.

Ah God, double wahala for dead body.

One of them raised his hand to slap me and I dodged it, the others howled like a pack of werewolves. What audacity.

It is not audacity, but me I want out of this city before I get caught by the flood of canes coming. As I saw one of them loosening his belt I knew shit was about to get from 1 to 100 like real quick. I looked up to the sky and asked, WWJD?

Flee all appearance of evil came the reply loud and clear.

I dropped and scooped a hand full of sand from one of the Craters that dotted the floor of the classroom, threw it in the face of the guy blocking the door and bolted. They didn't look twice at the one that got powdered with sand. These sons of guns took off after me.

I knew if I was caught, it has be for me that day. The thought of being belted by students three classes my junior added extra strength to my legs and I flew.

They pursued me from the Junior School, across the huge field that divided the schools, into the hallowed grounds of Senior Secondary School. I felt they would have turned back when I moved into the SSS section, but a glance backwards showed me they were not going to so easily shaken off.

So I looked into the skies again and asked, any ideas?

I was approaching the one storey building that housed the SSS 1 class by that time. I was already hearing the laboured breathe of one of them right on my heels.

Desperate times they say calls for desperate measures.

As I approached the closest window, I knew salvation lied right behind the window. Without checking whether there was a teacher in the class, I leapt in and dropped on the floor, rolling to break my fall.

My pursuers skidded to a halt by the window and were sending lasers of death to me with their eyes. But me, I didn't care. I was safe, for the moment and I needed to catch my breath from a straight sprint that must have lasted almost ten minutes. Adrenalin sure does wonders.

My dramatic entrance into the classroom made everyone look up and check what's up. What they saw was a tiny lad lying on the floor of their class with about eight sweat soaked lads standing outside their window breathing heavily.

Then the devil pushed one of them, he climbed the window and entered the class. About three other guys climbed in and joined him.

Wrong move.

With the height of the window, the length of their shorts couldn't be seen from the class, but immediately they climbed in, the class could see they were junior students.

Abomination!

One of the SSS1 boys stood from his chair and asked them to knee-down. Guess that was when they knew they've messed up big time. They did a fast u turn and made for the window. The whole class stood and ran after them.

Tables turned, the hunters became the haunted.



The SS boys pursued them Down the field, sending them off with stones and other throwables. By that time, I already made my way out of the class and entered into mine.

By break time, the JSS boys mobilized and stood by the field and rained down stones on the senior school. The senior school made a call to arms and they too were sending stones back, with overturned desks serving as makeshift Shields.

Teachers with cars parked on the field quickly moved their cars to avoid tales of broken windscreens. The rest of the day was spent like that. But I had a good time learning about amino acids and the RNA in the Biology class.

Lesson Learnt

When caught at sea in a storm, pray to God and row for shore.

## Episode 09

### Inter School Sports

During the school calendar year, different sporting activities are organized for secondary schools by the state government and other institutions. My school used to participate in three of those.

We used to contest for the Principals' cup, a football competition. Different racing competition organized by corporate bodies like Peak milk. The last is street fighting, organized by the students themselves.

OBHS generally doesn't go far in the former two sports, but when it comes to street fighting, that is the school to beat. Literally.

The street fighting didn't have a structured format, no rules of engagement and most times start for no reason. My school might go for a football match and we got beat, our supporters would take out the beating on the students of the opposite school. We might even win the match and want to reinforce the message of the beating on the field by beating their students outside of the field.

It got so bad our school was banned from bringing in students to watch their matches. But there was no rules stopping them from hanging around the venue of the match, so it really didn't do much good. At most, it only gave them more reasons to take out their vexation on the students of the other schools.

Now, the fights were not limited to those that came to watch the match. OBHS boys might be coming from a match and run into a small group of students of the opposite

school. These poor students might not even know their school had a football match, talk less of them winning.

But who cares? Ignorance was not an acceptable excuse. You get beat whether you knew or not.

Sometimes, one can just be unfortunate enough to wear a uniform that resembled the uniform of the wrong school. Before the error could be cleared, ones' ears would already be ringing from slaps that landed from different directions.

In our neighborhood, there were a couple of schools that had notoriety like OBHS, Lagelu Grammar School and Holy Trinity Grammar School. But then, we trumped them at it.

The weapons used for this kind of warfare were very carnal, sticks, stones, African Magic, cutlasses and glass bottles. Handguns have been known to surface once or twice. Sometimes the fighting would get so bad riot police would have to be called in to restore peace to the streets. Before then, some heads would have been bleeding, bones broken and cars vandalized.

One fateful day, before my school was banned, I carried my two left legs and followed to watch ball. It was after exams, the two weeks of free time while the results were being prepared. Not that there was much results preparation to do, since most students carry bold red Fs in their report cards. But I guess all righteousness had to be fulfilled.

We were enjoying the match when we started hearing war chants coming from the other side of the field. Songs in line of "Wait for us, wait for us, if your papa born you well, wait for us"

My school people started chanting in reply "If it can turn to war it should turn to war, if it can turn to fight it should turn to fight, we are omo Akin (courageous men) "

No no no o. My father's name is Aiki not Akin. I want no part of this.

Apparently, one of our boys went to ask a girl from the other school out, the girl's school boyfriend took offense and attacked our boy. Thing turned into a fight of bottles and their boy got stabbed in the arm. So they were ready to take their pound of flesh.

I didn't want to wait around to find out how things would go down. Thank you very much. I'll rather read reports of the events than witness it. The problem was, I didn't know my way around that side of Ibadan and none of my friends came to school that day. It was boredom and loneliness that pushed me to go watch the match, I had to stick around and pray I make it out alive.

Immediately the match ended, the first of the stones flew. It turned to a stampede and everyone ran out into the streets where the fight was already on.

Everywhere was chaotic, I was scrambling under bodies locked in battle, looking for a safe way out of the place. I found my way to a local compound. All the doors and windows were shut, the people living there were making themselves scarce.

Then I heard the sound of the police sirens and tear gas canisters spraying the air. Perfect, if the fighters don't kill me, the police would arrest me and my mom would do the honors of killing me.

Just then I heard the sound of someone running towards where I was. I turned to the opposite direction and took off. I heard the sound of feet still following me and I cried out.

As I ran I prayed to God for forgiveness of sins. I confessed on the sins I've ever committed, I mentioned the number of times I had raided the soup pot and liberated meats held captive there. I confessed sins I consciously committed, those I committed with my unconscious mind and those that I had plans of committing later in the future. If I should die today let me make this heaven.

I must have been running for almost five minutes, weaving through pathways between closely built houses I had no idea where they led, when I risked a glance back. I saw a fluttering of yellow cloth.

I looked back again and saw my pursuer was actually a student of my school. Dude was actually trying to catch up with me so we could figure our way together. Safety in numbers.

I stopped and allowed him to catch up with me. Turned out he knew his ways around the neighborhood. We walked back towards school together, recounting our experiences in excited voices. The experience was scary but fun at the same time.

We were close to the school when we saw a group of students from the other school coming in our direction. We turned and without as much as saying bye ran off in different directions.

Who school epp, I ran all the way home and never stepped out of my school to go watch any match.

Lesson Learnt

The cat has nine lives, yet curiosity killed it. I one have one, why won't I get sense



Episode 10

Epilogue

Writing about all the events, escapades and run ins I had in the school would take a volume substantially more than this collection. There was the ill fated attempt to turn the school into a mixed school by admitting females into the JSS1.

The assault on people passing through the school, girls especially.

The time the school was turned to a weed smoking haven after closing.

My first introduction to the female species.

My skipping school to go to a cyber café in the days when internet was just introduced.

The various characters we had as teachers.

The food we ate, bread and beans, early morning peppered puff puff and the rest

Horrendous nicknames we gave each other amongst others. Hopefully a time will come when I will be able to write this into one volume.

2006 was the year I left the school, I wrote my WAEC exams there. I think there is no need to say our results were terrible.

The day I went to check my result online I learnt the lesson that success is comparative. There were three people ahead of, all from my school. The first checked, he had credit in English and CRS, with 3 Fs. Dude was devastated and started weeping.

The next person checked, he had one credit and 5 Fs, the first dude had to tune down his own tears to allow the second guy bawl.

The third guy checked, F9 parallel! By now the first guy had stopped crying and thanking his God that at least he has 2 credits to take home.

Now my turn. As you must have noticed, the results were getting worse progressively, and I was the one standing after a F9 parallel score. What can be worse than that? I checked and I had one of the best results from the school. I had 4 C6s, English, Yoruba, Physics and Agric Science. From what I heard, only three of us had credit in English and only one person had credit in English and Mathematics, Popoola, the senior prefect (late now). The way I leapt for joy, one would have thought I had A parallel. The others were green with envy.

When I got home and showed them the result, I got a dressing down, with comparison being made with my elder brother who aced his results in one sitting. He didn't even have to check the result of his NECO. But do I care? I just saw someone take home a sheet filled with 9 Fs and you are saying I shouldn't be thankful for my precious 4 Cs?

Lesson Learnt

Celebrate your little successes; there are people who would kill just to have them.