

# REPOSITIONED

THE JOURNEY

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“To those who have given up time, money, and resources for the primary objective of connecting others to their destinies.”

## THE CRASH

The head lights of the car they just overtook disappeared rapidly as Mike looked into his rear view mirror. Taking a quick scan of the passengers in his new SUV, the picture he saw was a clear reflection of the mood. Loud and hearty laughter rang throughout the vehicle. His friends and colleagues had decided to take the ride home in his vehicle. They had assembled in the club in their different cars but decided to take a ride in his, not wanting to break up the party they were leaving behind at the club.

Michael pushed his large Sequoia beyond the 140Km/hr mark. The vehicle felt very stable, rocked only by the hearty movements of the occupants it was carrying.

“We are actually having an after-party in here. Whooooow!,” Timi let out.

The other five passengers in the vehicle let out raucous bouts of laughter. They had all probably had too much to drink, hence Mike’s had insistence on driving. Not only was he in a soberer state than most of them, he also knew these roads like the back of his hands. He had lost count of the number of times he had driven along this road in the dead of night, much to the disapproval of his father.

Mike deftly moved the vehicle around two large potholes in the road without dropping his speed. The sharp movement and body roll of the vehicle caused the five in the back to fall over each other. They let out another round of laughter. Nike was in front with Mike. The other six had forced her into the front seat and had her belted up. She had slipped as they walked out of the club but seemed to have got a hold of herself as she sat unnerved as Mike pushed his new vehicle

faster. He loved the stunning beauty sitting beside him, but he loved his car even more.

Letting out a light chuckle at this thought, he knew Nike would pick a fight with him if she found out what was going through his mind. He would probably have had to explain that it was the alcohol in his system that made him rather light headed. He cast a slight glance sideways to study her a little more closely. He had been so busy leading his team in securing the just concluded business deal that he had not paid much attention to her in a while. He had always admired her elegance. She was pretty, intelligent and tough - the kind of woman he would like to have at his side. Catching the look in her eyes, there was no mistaking it. He had seen this look severally over the past few months as they worked together and he knew it was going to be another long night. Thank God it was Friday.

The flashing lights ahead of him let him know they were approaching a security check post. He knew all the security operatives by name, a tribute to his generous tips and jokes he always exchanged with them from time to time. As he pulled up to the check point and rolled down his glass, he realized that he did not recognize this particular operative.

“Chairman,” Mike began.

“Boss,” the operative answered.

“Where Landlord?” Mike inquired in local vernacular. ‘Landlord’ was the nick name he coined for the officer in charge of this particular check point.

“There was an emergency call further down the road and they went to check it out.”

There was something odd about the way the officer spoke. Mike noticed it but couldn't quite lay his finger on what it was. Normally the officer would take a quick scan of the car and flag them on. Drivers were rarely pulled over in these parts at night.

"Just be careful," the officer said as he flagged them on.

Mike hit the gas and his V8 engine roared back to life. He was still wondering what to make of the odd encounter when Ola spoke up from the middle seat.

"That officer must be scared. He was visibly shaken. Maybe we intimidated him."

"How could he possibly be scared?" Timi asked from the back.

The lady who sat in the back, whom Mike was not too familiar with spoke up.

"Please, could you turn up the music and the step on the gas? I can't wait to get to the rendezvous and continue the party."

Mike smiled. Timi must have told her about their getaway spot where they spent their weekends away from town.

"It is still about an hour away. So you better get comfortable," Mike replied as the vehicle picked up speed.

A few minutes later everyone except Nike was asleep.

"You really know these roads Mike. Even at these speeds, your driving is rather smooth," she said.

Smiling, he mumbled his thanks.

"You did well on the negotiation," he told her.

"Not as well as you did," she replied. "I can't believe we finally pulled it off. After so many years. It is just like a dream."

"It's real," Mike replied. "Anyway, we still have a few loose ends to tie up, but I guess we can get those sorted out in a few days."



As he drove through the night, something caught his attention - flashing lights in his rear view mirror. At this speed, no one should be able to catch up with them. He had driven these roads for many years and had never had anyone keep up with him at this speed and at this time of the night. He glanced at the digital display in the dashboard: 2:19 AM.

The last thing Mike clearly remembered was his speedometer reading 180Km/h, the clock reading 2:19AM, and the flashing lights in his rear mirror. Every other thing came in a blur.

A loud explosion, slamming his brakes, the vehicle leaning dangerously over, a deep pothole in the road, the crash of his hood and the sound of crunching metal, wild spinning ... could he be dreaming... a loud bang, more rolling and then everything was still. Before Mike passed out, he heard the hushed purr of his engine and the song from the sound system ringing out... *I ONCE WAS LOST, BUT NOW I AM FOUND WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE...* Michael never remembered loading that track into his playlist, but then, maybe Nike did. She had been the DJ all through the ride.

This thought of Nike brought his attention back to the situation with a gasp. With much concern for her condition, he tried to reach over to her. Only then did he realize that the airbags had deployed. The vehicle was actually lying on its side, the driver's side. Nike's arms dangled lifelessly towards him.

"Oh my God!" he gasped.

Slowly he began to realize that they were in a serious dilemma. He wondered how the other five in the rear were doing.

"Timi?" he called out.

No response.

“Ola!” No response.

“Jane. Cindy. Tracy!” No response.

The pain searing through his side jarred him out of his concern for the others. He began to feel woozy. This wasn't the alcohol. His system was shutting down. His vision got blurry and everything became blank.

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Sergeant McArthur and his patrol team drove slowly back to their check post. They had been informed by commuters about a possible security threat on the road. They had been on the chase for a particular notorious group and were hoping to intercept them. However, there was no sign of them. This was usually the problem in these parts. Unlike the desert plains where he was raised, McArthur detested the lush vegetation of the south. He liked the resultant cool weather but detested the challenge the foliage caused for security operatives. Thugs could operate for hours and disappear completely into thin air.

His boys remained silent. He guessed they were all tense in anticipation of any engagement with the enemy. He considered lightening up their mood but decided it was better that they remained alert. McArthur had been on the road for the better part of his adult life and after spending so much time on it, he could tell a lot from tracks and debris on the road. What he saw ahead of him did not look good. The trooper driving their patrol vehicle slowed the vehicle down and eventually pulled over to the side. They quickly scanned the

scenery with the high intensity flash lights mounted next to the gunnery on the roof of their vehicle. No signs of an ambush.

“Let’s check it out,” the Sergeant said to his men as two of them disembarked. The driver and the two soldiers handling the automatic weapons on the vehicle remained in place.

As he inspected the road tracks, the sergeant could quickly tell that a crash had just happened. However, he could see no vehicle. The pieces of rubber he saw on the road indicated that there had been a tire blow-out. It must have been a large vehicle as the skid marks and the groves cut by the rim of the vehicle in the road were rather large.

“Maybe a truck,” the trooper with the Sergeant suggested.

“No,” McArthur countered. “Trucks do not sustain such damage from a single burst tire.”

After inspecting the debris on the road, the broken head lamps, the detached bumper and fragments of glass on the road, he came to his conclusion.

“It must have been a jeep or a minivan,” he said.

They walked further down the road.

“Ah, I see,” McArthur explained as they approached the large pothole in the road. “The driver must have braked trying to avoid this pothole and had a blow out in the process. From what I can see, the vehicle must have rolled over. This is bad. Since we can’t see the vehicle, it only means it has gone off the road into the side ditch.”

After searching for about twenty minutes off the road, one of the troopers let out a shout. He must have found something, McArthur thought. On approaching the trooper, they noticed dim lights further down, off the road. Setting their guns down and beckoning on the patrol vehicle, they walked towards the source of the light. They

waited for a few minutes as their vehicle focused its flash lights on the wreckage in a distance. The engine was still running as McArthur and his team approached the vehicle.

His heart began to race. The welfare of the victims disturbed him. How long had they been there? How quickly could they be evacuated? Was anyone alive? These thoughts and more raced through his mind. But something else gnawed at him. The vehicle looked familiar. It couldn't be. It reminded him of Mike's new vehicle. The one he saw at the vehicle registration office earlier in the day when he went to log in his activity report. Funny he should have such a thought he said to himself as he cast it out of his mind. Besides, Michael should be almost two hundred kilometres away in the city.

A quick look at the plate number of the vehicle wiped all hopes away from his mind. This was the number; "GOD'S SON". Michael had specially requested for that number to be made. As he sighted the number, he broke into a run towards the jeep which perched precariously on its side at the edge of the ditch. On reaching the vehicle, he could hear a muffled moan from the rear end of the vehicle. This couldn't be possible.

Smashing the glass on the trunk lid, the Sergeant quickly peered into the vehicle. He could make out seven distinct bodies. The smell of alcohol and cigarettes mixed with blood would have knocked the average person back. The time on the dash board read 3:30AM. The Sergeant was still dumb founded as he tried to come to terms with the fact that Michael, who had dubbed him *Landlord*, might be dead right here in front of him.

How would his father take it? What effect will it have on his company? What of the lives of those here? How long had they been here?

“Call the emergency line. Report a red alert case,” the Sergeant barked.

“Yes sir,” the trooper replied as he hurried towards the radio in the patrol vehicle as the sergeant and the other troopers got busy bringing the victims out of the vehicle.