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BORROWED HEARTS

Written by

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FADE IN:

1 INT. ALEX'S CAR (MOVING) - MORNING

1

ALEX NDUKA, 42, tall, handsome, with an average height, drives through a lonely road. The clock on his car's dashboard says - **2:08 AM**. He looks exhausted as he wipes sweat from his face with the sleeves of his shirt. Just then, his phone beeps and when he checks it, its screen illuminates his eyes, which are heavy with exhaustion. It is a message that reads: "**House rent overdue. Payment latest by month end.**" He swipes away the message angrily. A new WhatsApp message pops up from "**Ezinne (Sister).**" The preview text reads: "**Bros, Mama's drugs are finished o. The chemist said...**" Alex lets out a frustrating sigh and turns down the phone's face. Then, the phone rings. It has "My Love" on the screen. He takes the call--

ALEX
(wearily)
Hello, babes--

CUT TO:

2 INT. BEDROOM. ALEX NDUKA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

2

BECKY NDUKA, slightly younger than Alex, beautiful and in her pajamas, has her phone to her ear where she stands by the window, looking at the exterior--

BECKY
Have you fixed the tire?

ALEX (O.C.)
Yes. I have. I guess I need a new one.

Silence filters through the air--

ALEX (O.C.) (cont'd)
I'm heading home right now--

BECKY
Sorry about that--

ALEX (O.C.)
No, no. It happens. I'll soon be home. How's Maya?

BECKY
She's sleeping in her room.

ALEX (O.C.)
Okay. I'm coming.

BECKY
See you soon.

She ends the call and as she walks away from the window, she stops suddenly, whines in pain and clutches her stomach. Then, she stifles a deep, rattling cough into a cloth to muffle the sound. After a while, it subdues. She picks up one of the papers littering the bed. The paper in her hand shows the letterhead of a hospital - **Rosemary Hospital** - with a slightly smaller texts that read - **Medical Bill**. Becky sighs and packs the rest of the papers on the bed. She hides them under the mattress before walking slowly out of the room.

3 INT. SITTING ROOM. ALEX NDUKA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

3

It is a small sitting room with a small shelf and a television sitting on it. Alex sits on a chair reading through a message on his phone. It reads: "**Dear esteemed parent, your ward will not be permitted into the school premises due to unpaid...**"

MAYA (O.C.)
Good morning, dad--

Alex looks up to see MAYA, about 14, pretty and already in her school uniform. Alex smiles back at her--

ALEX
Hey, Maya. Good morning. You're set already.

MAYA
Yes, dad.

Becky comes into the room just then, holding two plates of food--

BECKY
Sorry, guys. The toast is slightly burnt--

Alex takes one plate and smiles, savoring the food already--

ALEX
I like them burnt--

He starts munching the toast already while Maya carries a sad face--

MAYA
But you said slightly burnt, mum.
This is so---burnt--

ALEX
Really? Let me see--

Alex takes one of Maya toasts and starts eating it. Maya protests--

MAYA
But you're eating my food, dad--

ALEX
Thought you said it's so burnt--

They laugh as Alex leaves her food and even pushes his to Maya, who's eating by now. Maya pushes his plate back to him--

MAYA
No, dad. You need to eat--

ALEX
Come on, I can get something--

BECKY
That's right, Alex. You've not been eating well lately.

MAYA
That's right, dad.
(to Becky)
Is there something hot to go with this, mum?

BECKY
Oh, sorry. Your tea is on the kitchen cupboard. Get your dad's coffee too.

Maya leaves the room as Becky wraps her arms lovingly around Alex from the back--

BECKY (cont'd)
This is not healthy for someone who works more than 12 hours a day.

Alex sighs as Becky walks to a seat--

ALEX
The landlord has been sending me series of threatening messages. There's also Maya's school fees I need to balance.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)
 I'm running out of time. Those are
 two important bills I need to clear
 right now.

Becky looks on with a nod. She opens her mouth to say
 something but closes it. Alex notices this--

ALEX (cont'd)
 Is there something you want to tell
 me?

BECKY
 No. Nothing, really--

Maya walks back to the room.

BECKY (cont'd)
 You better hurry up. You're getting
 late for school, Maya--

4 INT. ALEX'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

4

Alex drives through the road with a bright face. Then, he
 looks at his rear view mirror as he talks to a young woman,
 RITA MORRISON, late thirties, pretty, with an aura of
 elegance around her--

ALEX
 That's a nice restaurant, ma'am. It
 is one of the best 5 star hotels in
 the city--

But Rita says nothing as she looks at the exterior. After a
 moment, Alex speaks again--

ALEX (cont'd)
 I'm sorry ma, but is everything all
 right?

Then, Rita breaks down. At first, it appears careful and
 composed. But then turns to raw, humiliating sobs. Alex is
 silent, offering no platitude. He slows down and gives some
 tissues to Rita. Then, he pulls over, turning to Rita--

ALEX (cont'd)
 Let me give you some privacy, ma'am--

Alex alights the car as Rita battles to control her tears--

5 INT. ALEX'S CAR (MOVING) - LATER

5

Alex pulls over in front of a gated house. A brief silence pervades the air. Rita appears calm now. Then, Rita's voice breaks it--

RITA

Thank you--

Alex glances back to see Rita smiling shyly now--

ALEX

You're welcome, ma.

RITA

Give me your account detail--

Alex gives her a small card and Rita types on her phone. Soon, there is a beep on Alex's phone. A rough shock slowly spreads through his face. Then, he looks at Rita--

ALEX

450K!

RITA

Yes.

ALEX

But--

RITA

I know. Keep it, please--

ALEX

But-- this feels-- wrong.

RITA

I insist. Look, Alex. Right?

Alex nods--

ALEX

Yes--

RITA

You gave me something tonight. Let me give you something back--

She smiles at Alex who looks at the phone's screen again and then smiles back at Rita--

ALEX

Thank you, ma.

Rita speaks as she opens the door--

RITA
You're welcome--

6 INT. ALEX'S CAR (MOVING) - LATER

6

Alex is still trembling as he drives after dropping Rita. He looks at his phone's screen again to check the transfer notification--

ALEX
(mutters)
450K--

Then, he shouts--

ALEX (cont'd)
Wow! Oh my God! Wow!

Then, he dials his friend--

CUT TO:

7 EXT. A STREET - SAME TIME

7

JIDE, about the same age and height as Alex, walks to one side of the street and stands by one car with his phone to his ear and a bottle of beer in another. Music filters from nearby--

JIDE
Alex baba! I dey for that peppersoup joint. Noise plenty for there, that's why I come here con answer your call--
-

He takes a swig from the bottle in his hand--

JIDE (cont'd)
Where you dey? I think say you don close for night--

CUT TO:

8 INT. ALEX'S CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

8

Alex is still driving with the phone to his ear--

ALEX

(voice shaking)

Jide, something just happened. I carried this woman...from Ikoyi...she gave me...she gave me four hundred and fifty thousand naira--

CUT TO:

9 INT. A STREET - CONTINUOUS

9

Where he stands, Jide freezes, the bottle of beer halfway to his mouth. The noise around him seems to fade--

JIDE

Say wetin? Four-fifty? As in, 4-5-0-K? For one drop? Na your destiny helper you just carry o! Your village people has finally stopped pursuing you!

Then, he gulps down some content from the bottle--

JIDE (cont'd)

Alex, listen to me, you go save her number, right? Call her tomorrow! Tell her you enjoyed her...company. Omo, no dull yourself o! This is Lagos--!

CUT TO:

10 INT. ALEX'S CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

10

Alex still drives as he listens to Jide from the other end--

ALEX

(smiling)

Sure, Jide. I understand the hustle. I know it's an opportunity. I'll catch up with you at that joint tomorrow. Thanks, man--

11 MONTAGE

11

SFX: a fast music plays in the background--

1. Inside Alex's car, Rita passes him one of the packages in the backseat. Alex smiles in gratitude--

2. Alex looks shocked when he sees two hundred thousand naira in his account. He tries to refuse but Rita insists.

3. Alex looks at a paper in the bedroom with a blend of shock and confusion as Becky comes into the room, looking at Alex pleadingly.

4. Becky coughs and Alex brings a glass of water as she takes her pills. It is the last one.

5. Again, Alex is shocked as he looks at his phone's screen and smiles at Rita who smiles back.

6. Becky and Maya serve the food as the family settles down to a sumptuous meal.

12 INT. ALEX'S CAR (PARKED/DRIVING) - DAY

12

Rita enters the car as Alex turns on the ignition, glancing back at her--

ALEX

I'm so sorry ma for coming late to pick you--

RITA

It's okay, Alex. I requested you specifically. So, I have to wait.

Alex starts driving the car--

ALEX

Where are we going ma?

RITA

(feigns anger)

Alex! What did we say about this your ma, ma, ma, all the time? Call me Rita, please--

ALEX

Okay, Rita. Where are we heading?

RITA

I want to go for shopping but first let's go to the airport; I need to make a quick business transaction.

ALEX

Okay. There's something I need to tell you, Rita.

Rita is busy with her phone but speaks--

RITA
What is it?

ALEX
Today, I'm not picking up anybody again except you. So, please, don't pay me for today. Everything is on me.

Rita smiles as she looks at him in the rear view mirror.

RITA
That's a kind gesture, Alex. I appreciate that. But you know I have your account detail o.

ALEX
Please, I'm serious. Let me take care of today.

RITA
Okay. Let's see--

13 INT. ALEX'S CAR (PARKED) - NIGHT

13

Alex pulls over in front of Rita's place. Rita picks her phone and Alex speaks--

ALEX
Rita, we had a deal. No payment today.

Rita hesitates for a while and then smiles--

RITA
Okay. Can I ask you for something?

ALEX
Anything.

RITA
Can you stay for dinner?

Alex opens his mouth but no word comes out. Rita quickly adds.

RITA (cont'd)
I hate eating alone inside my place. You'd be doing me a favor, Alex.

She looks on at Alex who pauses for a bit. Then, he nods--

ALEX

Sure.

Rita smiles as Alex turns off the car engine and they both prepare to alight--

14 INT. DINING ROOM. RITA MORRISON'S PLACE - LATER

14

The dining room is exquisite, with modern furniture and fittings. Alex and Rita sit facing each other, with different dishes set before them--

ALEX

So, do you always have your chef prepare all these dishes for you all the time?

Rita smiles--

RITA

Actually, I'm craving some of them and asked her to prepare them. Most times, I stick to one of my favorites.

Alex looks around the place--

ALEX

You have a beautiful house, Rita.

Then, he begins to eat. Rita is silent for a while with a thoughtful look on her. She sips her wine--

RITA

What is the meaning of a beautiful house or marriage when it is just a facade?

ALEX

Excuse me--?

A curious look falls on Alex's face--

RITA

David is having an affair. Everything I built my life around is crumbling.

ALEX

I'm sorry to hear that.