Ikani's Homestead Short Stories

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The Dash versus Kichikichi

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Welcome to Garinmusabo, a beautiful city (at least the Tourists said it was when they managed to find it) Somewhere on the borders between Nigeria and Cameroun that's in West Africa. Here was one of the world's most Successful cosmopolitan cities in terms of peaceful coexistence amongst different ethnic and racial groups. The Tivs, the Idomas, the Igbos, the Hausas, the Yorubas, the English, the Moroccans, the Japanese, the French, the Americans, the Pakistanis…you could just about find anyone in this city, if you looked hard enough.

This was home to Adamu Mohammed, the twelve-year old boy who due to his overwhelming love of super-hero comics and stories decided to become one himself. That was a nice idea, but it was to change his life…maybe or maybe not… forever.
Adamu became the world's crazy, bogus and hopeless hero: **THE DASH**.

It was past midnight and Bugi Ali, an accountant at the Bank of the Bankrupt, swung his briefcase happily as he walked back home after a hard day's work. He jerked his head back and forth as he bounced around a corner. A well-deserved meal of boiled yam with tomato stew and chicken awaited his arrival home. He considered himself a very lucky Mr. Ali to have such a wonderful Mrs. Ali at home. He couldn't wait to get home. Lovely food and some blissful night's sleep. He walked past dark, murky buildings, which loomed all around him liked untidily stacked crates.

Suddenly someone stepped out of the darkness. *Schwiii!*

"Get out of my way, stupid animal!" the bulky stranger barked at the unsuspecting rodent he'd just stepped on, "Oya, my friend bring out ya money and hand over that briefcase." Bugi felt the cold conical barrel of an ancient-looking rifle engulf his lips. He was sweating and shaking as he handed over his valuables. The armed robber had a red baseball cap on his head and wore a white T-shirt and faded jeans. The criminal looked desperate! He looked dangerous! He looked like Bugi's old Home Economics teacher!

"Scream and I'll make those horrible red lips of yours black!" he threatened in a voice menacing enough to give a frail old man a heart attack. Bugi's lips trembled. A bright circle of light encompassed the two men.
"I knew it! The Dash!"
The robber quickly stuffed his pockets with the night's pickings and then looked up at the source of the light. In the pitch blackness of the night it seemed Garinmusabo had two moons shining over it one in the skies encrusted with twinkling stars, the other on the rooftop of Mama Gbenga's

Buka restaurant. A solitary figure basked his presence in the luminescence from the rooftop. It was the figure of a young boy. The robber carefully took aim and squeezed off a shot from his aged weapon. Quickly he reloaded his rifle when he realized he'd missed his target.

"More gunpowder," he hissed in exasperation, "Why did I even borrow that old hunter's gun? Dis kind of work is embarrassing, now…" *Shookoo! Shookoo!* He had to use a stick to push down some more pellets and gunpowder into the gun's muzzle. The weapon roared once more and, to his delight, the boy's head flew off his neck. The light on Mama Gbenga's restaurant went off.

"Nyeah, man. I'm de mean guy with de guns!" The man's eyebrows leapt up and down. He wiggled his shoulders. Bugi felt his tummy churn.

Someone tapped the jubilant crook on the shoulder. He turned to see a pipe wielded by a gloved hand slam down on his head, knocking him senseless. Bugi gasped. There he stood a short boy wearing a black mask, a sleeveless red shirt, yellow gloves and boots, and a pair of funny looking shorts… *The Dash!*

"Fear no more, humble sir," the noble hero began, "I'm the Dash, servant of the poor, the weak and the oppre…Excuse me…" Dash stuck his hand into his pocket and began to rumple and ruffle something about. He produced a crumpled piece of paper, straightened it out and gazed at it for a while.

"Aha, *yawwa*... servant of the poor, the weak and the oppressed. I have sworn to fight a never-ending battle against those who love evil and injustice. Mankind has got a lot to learn about peace, justice and good. So many times

I've asked myself: 'When shall the world correct it's mistakes?' and I always say…"

He was speaking to himself, Bugi had already left in a hurry to get home before his meal became cold and the captured thief had begun to snore horribly. He shrugged and bound his captive before leaving to call the police and get back home.

Later, Adamu was yawning and scratching his belly as he prepared to continue the sleep he'd interrupted with his recent escapade. "Adamu, you lazy, arrogant and inconsiderate human-being! Get up and get ready for school!" his mother yelled from outside his room just as his head touched and felt the cool, soft texture of his pillow. Some six hours later he was walking out the gates of Garinmusabo Secondary School carrying a heavy bag on his aching back.

"Homework," he groaned at a goat staring at him as it chewed its grassy meal. After a brisk lunch, Adamu settled down to do his homework.

"This question is just too difficult to answer. No, that's not it…no…No!" he slammed his hand on the Math textbook opened before him on the table. "This problem's impossible to solve it's too tough! How can a hen seek to know how many eggs she'd have left if 1/24 of them go bad just after the cock had estimated that finding their square-root leaves one with the answer 45.873? I thought only humans could do such stupid things?"

'Like father like son' was a phrase that was only too true in Adamu and Mr. Mohammed's case. The man looked exactly like his son only he was bespectacled and much taller. The Managing-Director at the AGROID agricultural

firm, Mr. Abdullahi Mohammed was often fond of bringing his work home with him. His wife, Hajiya Aisha, a proud mother of three (Adamu's two older sisters were away at a boarding school) would complain to him about the awful stink from the sacks of manure he brought home. Her kiosk was right in front of the house and customers smelling manure could be terrible for business. "Last week, two of my customers smelt your cow *poo-poo* and started accusing me of trying to sell them expired canned tomatoes", the woman would complain.

Today, however, Mr. Mohammed brought his colleague, Mr. James Onu, home with him. He was a veterinary doctor.

"Welcome, baba. Welcome, Mr. Onu."
Adamu's father nodded his head and smiled in response. Mr. Onu smiled too, but he went: "Hello-o-o, Adamu-u-u. Doing homework, eh?"
"Yes sir, and it's very tough. See. Take a look at this problem with all these 'find the square-root', 'then find the product', 'then multiply by 129990007.7654' and…"

"The answer is 0.765977," the man replied almost immediately before walking off to the kitchen to join his friend.

Chief Anthony Datsraiyt crossed his legs as he relaxed and reclined in his soft, expensive armchair. He was a millionaire although some mistook him for a billionaire. His rivals only recognised him as an engineer. He gently sipped his tea and took a look at the latest financial news and trends in the *Olds* newspaper. He let out a soft moan. He loved this comfortable armchair of his. It had been the first luxurious item he'd purchased when he made his first

millions some… two months ago. Chief Anthony was a businessman, a crafty one! That was the secret of his success being smart.

"One can't sell a groundnut without first tasting it", he'd proudly tell his admirers. No one knew what that meant.

"Don't move, old man!" a voice warned. He swerved his head round to behold the silhouette of a stranger in his living room. Suddenly all the lights went off. A sharp *pok!* followed.

"Ah! Ah! Ah! My eye!"

The lights came back on and the stranger clenched his teeth as his hands clasped the eye he'd banged against a bookshelf.

"Who… W-who are y-you?" Chief Anthony stuttered with disbelief. The stranger, intruder rather, took a step towards the Chief. Deep inside him the wealthy businessman felt cheated. He had spent a fortune purchasing those killer-dogs, brutes, from an old neighbour of his, but all they did was go on guarding the neighbour's house (even though he'd already packed out).

A black piece of cloth tightly wrapped over the face and knotted behind the head. A black kaftan-like shirt, elbow-length black gloves and black, baggy trousers tucked into shiny black boots, all to match. In addition to these, the intruder wore a brown vest cover with bulging pockets over his shirt. The white eyes painted onto his mask glared at Chief Anthony quite threateningly.

"You may call me," the intruder spoke, "*Kichikichi* or *The Dark Cockroach*!"

"What does *Kichikichi* mean?"

"Come on, what are you talking about?" the man snarled, "Is *kichikichi* not the sound cockroaches make under your bed?" Kichikichi grabbed the Chief and shook him violently.

"What do you want from me?" the poor man whimpered.

"I want something of great value from you."

"My wife is in London on holiday with our son so I can't have her prepare some of her fabulous chicken-plus-beef pepper soup for you."

"This man, stop playing with me fa!" Kichikichi dragged him to a wall with a multicoloured curtain draped over it. He pulled it aside to reveal a small safe in the wall.

"Open it and give me the diamond watch from Switzerland that you're hiding in there."

The Chief did as he was instructed and he was released.

Kichikichi melted away into the darkness and…*pok!* "Yargh!"… was gone.

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Oh!

So, that's what they mean by "Nigerian Internet Art"!

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Wall to wall, tree to tree Kichikichi jumped and crawled. Needle-like spikes on his gloves and boots made clutching to walls and tree trunks like an insect a very easy feat. Finally he was home. A dilapidated flat he had to rent from a fussy landlady who didn't like pests like children and animals like university students and dogs. It was one out of four flats arranged side by side in a bushy area very near to a rubbish dump. Kichikichi crawled onto the roof and picked up a bag which had been left there. He unzipped it and pulled out some clothes. After looking around and confirming that no one was around watching, he pulled off his mask. Kichikichi was no more. The man who dropped from the rooftop in an orange shirt and brown trousers was Ayuba Dosda, a twenty-five-year old journalist.

Ayuba unlocked his door, yawned and walked into his room. Closing the door behind him, he dipped his hand into his bag and pulled out Chief Anthony's diamond watch. He smiled and tossed it up and down in his hand. The anonymous 'boss' who had hired him for this job certainly had effective sources and excellent information. Crime was proving to be more lucrative than journalism, but Kichikichi had to remain an alibi. This was the last favour he intended to do for the 'boss', it was time to go solo. He looked at his wall clock. It was time to get back to the office, he'd been out to cover a football tournament when he decided to do some 'extra' work. Ayuba worked as a journalist with the *Newer News* magazine.

In the special class organised for students who were very poor at math, Adamu sat with his head resting on his fists. It was a class of eleven students. A serious problem was being discussed.

"All this math and 'education' is useless to me, Mr. Iqbal. I

don't need them for I'm going to become a successful and very rich rap-artist. I'll have money, clothes, cars and babes in bikinis surrounding me in my home in California.”

"My dear boy, if you suddenly lost all your wealth to, maybe, a natural disaster or lawyers, wouldn't it be nice to know you at least have your math and 'knowledge' left with you?" Mr. Iqbal the Pakistani math teacher asked. "No one can take that away from you and, who knows, you might end up becoming a richer person as one of the world's only rap-artist-mathematicians. They're harder to find and thus, earn more."

This was silly. Adamu couldn't wait to get out of this class. Just because he'd been given an 'impossible homework mission' he couldn't do, he had to suffer this way. Joseph, the fat boy who couldn't do his homework either, but had consoled himself with the notion that it wasn't necessary for a successful *gangster-rapper* life, took his seat and said no more of his plans and intentions. Mr. Iqbal had won… again.

"Okay, let's solve one more problem before we call it a day," the teacher smiled at his students, "Don't worry children, you'll get the hang of it. Before long you're bound to become experts in math. As with everything in life, just do your best. Always target the good, positive things in life and keep the bad away, right? Don't think negative."

That's the only thing that keeps the Dash going, Adamu thought to himself.

It was cloudy the next day the local weather forecast people had said it would be sunny, humid and chilly. Glued to a television set, Adamu was spending his weekend at home watching films.

"Ah. Ah. He's coming! Oh! Oh!"

He was watching *Zombie Sales Of Timbuktu* a horror film. It wasn't like those fake horror films where a couple would be taking a midnight stroll through the smelly woods when suddenly bloodcurdling howls fill the air. They'd be scared stiff. Then the man would leave his girlfriend to risk his life he'd expose the source of the howling. In the end they discover a bullfrog doing all the howling because someone had trod on its foot.

No, no, this was a real horror film!

A zombie smashed through a door with maggots dripping from all over its body. It began to shout and scream as wild chickens pounced on it from all directions.

Adamu held his breath.

"Adamu!" his mother called, "Go and get my milk from Mama Ibro Fulani." So he turned off the television, put on his tattered 'farmer, farmer-will-you-marry-me?' straw hat and marched out of the house to fulfil his mother's request.

At the office block of the *Newer News* magazine, Ayuba stood before his editor. The stocky man sat on his desk shaking with excitement.

"Ayuba, quick, there's a fire at the offices of the *Amebo* magazine our biggest rivals," he nearly choked as he chuckled with a mouth full of the mango fruit he was eating. "Get over there immediately, see what's happening and bring me a heart-warming story. We're about to take

over Garinmusabo's 'magazine-publication' industry! Hip, hip…"

The man kicked out his legs and threw up his hands and fell off his desk.

"I'm off, sir," Ayuba replied. He spun round and charged out of the office, leaving his editor sprawled out on the floor. He grabbed a tape recorder and the conspicuous bag he had kept under his own desk.

"Something powerful today, Ayuba?" a woman asked him as he rushed out the exit.

"Probably something nice as well, Linda," he smiled and was gone.

Adamu gawked at the flaming office building along with the noisy crowd which gathered. Pandemonium!

"The police should hurry up and get here!"

"Where are the fire fighters? The building's going to be totally destroyed!"

"My daughter's name is Farida not *Far Out Idea*!"

"Kai, I saw your hand in pocket!"

"Uche, you fine guy!"

Then a little girl shouted: "Look there's someone trapped on the third floor!"

Adamu's heart beat fast. The Dash's help was needed here. But, what about his mother's milk? He quickly pondered on his situation. The forest was nearby…

He had an idea.

Adamu had a special tree in the forest bordering

Garinmusabo to the west. There were quite a lot of trees here and they had shrubs and herbs scattered amongst their trunks. He strode over to his special tree, taking care he wasn't being watched by anyone. He pulled one of the vines dangling from the tree's branches.

Nothing happened.

He began to heave and tug.

"You're trying to be tough today because I didn't have any breakfast, right?" he groaned. A loud creak followed as a wide section of the tree's trunk was raised up like some thick curtain revealing the trunk's hollow interior. Adamu wrapped the vine around a branch. There was a bicycle in the tree.

The *Dash BMX*!

It had yellow tyres, black handles and a black seat. It had purple 'foam' bands on it displaying its name on them for all to see. The rest of the bicycle was coloured red. The Dash BMX even had a little windshield.

"Now!"

Adamu unbuttoned his shirt to reveal the red one underneath. Soon, he was zooming back home with his mother's milk.

"Mama, here it is," he called out to her before taking off once more. He never heard his mother's 'thank you'. By the time he got back to the scene of the fire, people had begun trying to douse the flames with buckets of sand and water.

"Aha, super-hero, super-hero! There's a man in the building!" someone shouted at Dash as he screeched his bicycle to a halt.

“How many times must I tell you people my name's Dash?!" he shouted back. There was no time to lose. The agile super-hero placed a plank of wood against a wall facing the smoking window where the man had been seen. He cycled back some distance before swinging round and 'gunning' his BMX straight for the plank. Luckily, the *Amebo* magazine's management hadn't built a tall wall around their establishment.

"Getting to 200km per hour," the Dash puffed playfully as he watched the plank come closer and closer. Then he shot over the wall.

"Eeyaah, my leg! I've pulled a muscle!" he screamed.

Kichikichi was pleased. He had a sack full of expensive and invaluable items and equipment he'd salvaged thus far from the burning offices. It was time to leave. The Dark Cockroach started as Dash flew in through the window on his bicycle. The boy came slamming into the sack knocking it out of the criminal's grasp. His Dash BMX hit the floor and bounced out another window. The young hero came crashing down a tree outside to be immediately surrounded by news reporters. The sack's contents were emptied all around him.

"Dash, what happened?" one reporter asked.

"I don't know where I dropped the man, but here are his things anyway. I need some rest," he groaned.

Six days later, Ayuba was still smouldering. The Dash had disgraced him. Everyone soon got know of what had actually happened to him at the burning *Amebo* magazine offices (he'd been spotted making a hasty escape from the inferno minutes after the Dash had crashed down the tree with Kichikichi's sack). The whole city was laughing at him.

"I'll get that brat!" he snarled. A typed challenge appeared on walls and trees all around Garinmusabo:

I'M GOING TO ROB THE INTERNATIONAL YUPPIES' BANK OF GARINMUSABO AT EXACTLY 2 PM TODAY AND I CHALLENGE THE DASH TO DARE STOP ME ONCE MORE!!!

- KICHIKICHI

Things got hot. Fifty armed policemen were stationed at the International Yuppies' Bank. People going in and out of the bank had to be routinely checked. All vehicles parked around the bank were carefully searched for suspicious looking items - bottles of petrol or bad imported cheese.

"Look sergeant, nothing's going to happen. It's all these jobless boys who keep playing 'hero-hero' games causing all this *mago-mago wuru-wuru*," one policeman complained. 'Mago-mago wuru-wuru' was a local phrase referring to a state of disorder and confusion or problems created.

"We've our orders," he was calmly told.

"But I'm hungry, sergeant!"

1.55pm. A dark, solitary figure crawled up the massive water tank standing some distance away from the bank. The tank stood about ten metres above the ground. Kichikichi watched the policemen below. He produced two canisters from his bulging vest along with a springy, metallic whip-like thing his 'cockroach line'. Kichikichi sneered.

Elsewhere, Adamu (as usual) was finding it quite difficult to sneak out of the house and save the world from the madness of Kichikichi in the guise of that beloved chap, the Dash. His mother insisted he had to do the dishes.

"You're not going anywhere until you wash all those plates in the kitchen sink and cut some oranges for your father."

She blocked the doorway and watched him.

"Being a super-hero's no easy job," he sighed.

2pm. Kichikichi's cockroach line was lashed out and it

struck a lamppost. The thing coiled itself around the lamppost and when the stealthy owner clad in black pressed a button on the handle, the metallic coils contracted and held tight. Down he swung towards the bank. As he went past the surprised policemen, he dropped the two canisters. The bank and its surroundings became swallowed up in thick gas from the canisters. Bank staff, customers and policemen ran helter-skelter in all directions, coughing and spitting. Kichikichi pressed the button again and the coils slackened and released their hold. As he landed, the Dark Cockroach whipped his line back and squeezed it into one of the numerous pockets on his vest.

"Celebrate! This is the cockroach not the spider!" he laughed with glee and emptied the bank safe. The loot he loaded unto an abandoned police pick-up van parked by the bank's gates. He jumped into the driver's seat and the vehicle shot out of the bank's premises. Some officers fired upon the van as it sped past them, but their shots went wide for they were blinded by Kichikichi's gas.

"Dash, you coward!" Kichikichi yelled at a group of TV reporters, " Kichikichi's too much for you and this town!"

He did it! He actually did it!

He was rich! Rich! Rich!

Now he could get the herd of cattle he'd always wanted and much more. First, he had to get out of the city. One had to move quickly before the police re-organized and came after one in hot pursuit. They might even have all the of the city's borders closely monitored. It didn't matter, Ayuba already had a plan. Everyone would be looking for Kichikichi, not some young journalist on his way to the village to visit his ill mother.

At that moment, at 10 Abinci Street, Adamu was rushing out of the house. He'd done the dishes, cut oranges for his father and then returned the plastic bowl his mother had borrowed from Uche's mother three days ago, over at Fufu Street. Oh, she had forgotten all about the bowl. *Heh-heh, Adamu, your mama must be getting old fa*. Well, he'd done all that. Now he dashed off to save the world as Dash before he was too late and his entire hopes for a successful super-hero career became dashed.

Sukwi! Sukwi! Sukwi!

The Dash peddled faster and faster.

"Being a… hah… super-… hih… hero is no easy… heh… job!" he gasped, puffed and panted. He rode across a wooden board placed over a gutter, screeched round a corner and headed towards the International Yuppies Bank.

The police pick-up van popped up from nowhere and headed straight for our shocked hero.

"Hah!" he exclaimed and pulled hard on the BMX's brakes. He even had his heels scratching along the sandy road as he tried desperately to stop the bicycle. Panic! Kichikichi panicked as well. He thought he'd seen a drum and bicycle blocking the road and he slammed hard on the brakes. The Dash BMX hit the pick-up's bumper and sent Dash smashing through the windscreen. Kichikichi screamed in a high-pitched voice like his brother's five-year old daughter when she'd been protesting being taken to a doctor who'd give her an injection. He covered his face as Dash landed in the passenger seat beside him followed by a shower of broken glass. The vehicle swerved out of control and they crashed into a tree. They'd stopped.

"Kai!" Dash's shirt and shorts were torn, "What kind of bogus driving was that, Mr. Police-Driver? When my father drove into your cafeteria you guys harassed him non-stop. Look how you drive!"

Kichikichi didn't answer. His head was slumped against the steering wheel. He was unconscious.

DASH CAPTURES NOTORIOUS KICHIKICHI.

Olds newspaper

Two days had passed since that famous incident and Dash stood, once again, surrounded by journalists and reporters.

"Dash, what would you like to tell the people of this city and, in fact, the whole world now that you've rid Garinmusabo of Kichikichi the Dark cockroach?"

"Could someone please help me repair my bicycle? I'm stone-broke at the moment, patching my shorts should be work enough for me."

At the Welkom Prison, Ayuba Dosda sat fuming. The police had gotten back all the things he had stolen as Kichikichi.

"All because of a stupid child!" he snarled.

"Don't feel too bad about it, there aren't any rats in this cell and human-rights activists say the prison standards are quite commendable," his cellmate tried to cheer him up.

"Shut up, boss!"

Ayuba's cellmate was none other than his old 'boss'. The 'boss' had lost his secret identity now he was Airee Danlami, the failed poet who had decided to turn to a life of crime instead.

"One of my poems ought to cheer you up," he suggested

and began to chant.

I and I in jail

I said I and I in jail

Oh, oh, oh

Don't you understand what I'm trying to tell you that I and I in jail

You know, j-a-l-e or is it j-a-i-l

I and I in however you spell jail

I and I…

"Oh no! No-o-o-o!" Ayuba sobbed, "This is why I stopped working for you. Your horrible chanting can break a man's heart and even his pet vulture's! Damn you, Dash! I'll make you pay for all this!”

10 Abinci Street. Adamu sat in his room mending his shorts. Twice already he'd sewn his gloves to them.

Being a super-hero's no easy job.

Some words and/or terms some readers probably didn't understand:

AMEBO: a gossip or tattler

BABA: 'papa', i.e., 'father'

FA: an expression telling one to take note or be warned about something

KAI: an exclamation like 'Hey!'

OYA: 'Right, you!' or 'Quick, you!'

YAWWA: 'That's right' or 'That's it' in the Hausa language (in Nigeria)