

Hustlers

Rasheedah Liman

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Dedication

For Professor A. A. Liman and our children,
Mohammed Baqir, Al-Sajjad and Fatima Zahra. They
waited patiently, gave me courage and made being a
wife and mother easy and wonderful.

Foreword

The play *Hustlers* is written from an insider's knowledge, given that Dr. Rasheedah Liman is a Lecturer and an administrator in the University system. It is an x-ray of different issues that take place within tertiary institutions in Nigeria. However, beyond just looking at events and misdemeanor of students on campus, the play is an analysis of larger social issues, which cross boundaries from the wider society into tertiary institutions. And those same issues in the wider world have significance in the conduct of students.

One of the critical points of interrogation, and indeed the hook on which the arguments of the play hinges, is character. The University, and any tertiary institution for that matter, is a space for the development of character and learning. But these two outcomes/qualities are in short supply in the play's universe. For example, the burgeoning student union politics is characterized by deceit; and we see this as Azeem the aspirant for student union president builds his political base on lying to hordes of girls whom he intends to use against his opponent. He also intends to blackmail the University administration by his collusion with Mallam Barau, the Vice-Chancellor's messenger to steal confidential and sensitive documents. In the end his ambition is defeated by his arrest.

Angela, Jamila, Ummi and Bukola typify the deficit of character as their moral decadence takes the better of them.

Angela is the Trofimova of the group, who in her ten years on campus, has made the place her empire to terrorize other girls. And, Jamila and Ummi are shady characters whose surface belies their real selves.

In this regard, the playwright asks the reader and audience to reflect on the intricacies of campus life beyond just passing judgment on the student characters in the play. It is for us to assess the roles of different unseen characters whose attitudes impact on the way students behave: parents, office holders, older and supposedly role models in society. In the end two things are in jeopardy. One is character and learning, which the University should promote. The second is whether the larger Nigerian society can achieve the meeting point of the two such that the students from Nigerian institutions of higher learning demonstrate the qualities of good leaders, workers and parents.

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Finally, I say thank you to my family and friends for giving me a safety nest and a peaceful space to exercise my creative impulse

Characters

Angela	A Student
Jamila	Angela's Roommate
Ummi	Angela and Jamila's Friend and Roommate
Azeem	Aspiring Student Leader
Lekenson	Azeem's Friend and Political Strategist
Solomon	Ummi's Boyfriend
Secretary	V.C's Personal Secretary
Barau	Messenger in V.C's Office
Mr. Johnson	Visitor in V.C's Office
Hajiya	V.C's Wife
Lady	Visitor in V.C's Office
Bukky	Student and Secretary's Daughter
Alhaji Tanko	Jamila's Lover
Porter	Student Hostel Worker
V.C	Vice Chancellor of the University
Aminu 1	Angela's Friend
Student 1	
Student 2	
Student 3	
Security Man	

Act One



Scene One

(A room in the Female hostel. The room is rather small but clean and tidy like its three occupants. Jamila is a smallish Fulani girl who was recently admitted to the University for a Diploma Programme in Library Science. Angela or Angee as she is popularly called is a tall and bossy girl who hails from the East. Her popularity stems from her overstay in the University and her frequent physical combat with friends and enemies alike. The third occupant is Ummi, a three hundred level student of Pharmaceutical Sciences. Although she is not strikingly beautiful like the two other girls yet she stands out among the three because of her calm posture and friendliness. The girls are staring at some pile of clothes in the middle of the room. The current discussion by the girls is however, everything but calm)

Jamila: (Shouting at the top of her voice) She did what? Can you see the kind of mess I have been saying we should avoid? Anyhow, we must deal with her. Can you imagine that K-Bow legged girl? If it were only an ugly girl with a K leg that would have been manageable but an ugly chickenpox infected girl with a combination of one K-

leg and a bow leg is just too much an insult. (Catching her breath and hissing, she continues) Even if you don't do something, I will personally find a good way of dealing with the useless girl.

Angela:

(Angrily stands up from the mattress she has been perching. She places her hands on her head and moves back and forth around the room in an agitated manner) My sister, she don finish me and I don finish ... after how many years in this school? In 7 years, no! (She stops and counts the years on her fingers) Yes! Not 7 years, but 8. In 8 years no boy dared to face me not to talk of an ordinary girl attacking me like this. Abi the world wan end?

Ummi:

(Anxiously) Is it not possible that it was someone else? Remember that you fought with some girls in Castle hostel just last week. It might be one... (Angela cuts in sharply)

Angela:

(Nodding her head violently) No way! Tina and Ngo are too afraid of me. After the beating I gave them, am sure they have

learnt their lesson. They will not dare invite my anger again. (*She picks up a blue jeans and a pink and black sleeveless blouse from the pile of clothes. She continues to lament while tears drop from her eyes*) Ummi, just look at this, (*showing them to Ummi*) all my clothes. She is so heartless that she did not even spare my designers. (*She picks up a long dinner gown among the pile*) Oh my God! Look at the designer that Azeem bought for me on my birthday. (*She now sobs loudly*)

Jamila: Wait oh! What did the devil use - razor blade or scissors? (*Taking a closer look at one of the clothes*) No! Scissors can hardly damage them like this!

Angela: (*Checking the dresses one after the other*) I swear, this girl really got me oh! (*Turning to the girls*) But why didn't she just kill me? She wants me to go around this campus naked, abi? No problem! I will do wash and wear with the one she left on my back but not until I finish dealing with her.

Ummi: (*Trying to calm her down*) Angee, please take it easy oh! It is important that you

handle this issue quietly. What will people say when they hear about the cause of this problem?

Jamila: (*Shouting*) Problem? What problem are you talking about? (*Silence*) Talk now.

Ummi: We all know that...

Angela: (*Moves aggressively towards Ummi*) We all know what? Hmmm! Ummi, don't make me turn on you oh?

Ummi: But we have to be reasonable.

Jamila: (*Hissing*) Please, keep quiet, lady madam reason. If not jealousy, what will make a girl who wears nothing but rags destroy Angela's clothes including most of her designers with scissoring) No Jamila. Scissors can never dos.

Angela: (*Interrupt* this. It is only a brand new razor blade that can shred my Giorgio Armani jeans like this.

Jamila: (*Patting her on the back*) Sorry my dear. Yes it must be. (*Turning to Ummi*) Yes, lady madam defense, answer her.

Ummi: *(Looking sober)* Bukky's rags did not actually cause this problem. We all know the reason. That is even if she is responsible for the crime in the first place.

Angela: *(Angrily)* Yes! Now I understand where you are going. If you were not my friend, which I am beginning to doubt now, I would have said you collaborated with Bukky in order to destroy all my expensive dresses.

Jamila: *(Looking at Ummi in a suspicious manner)* Who knows? Some so-called friends are hard to trust.

Ummi: *(Shocked)* What do you mean?

Angela: She means exactly what you heard. Come to think of it. She must have carried out her evil act after I finished washing, hanged my clothes on the line and when I must have left for class. Tell me, how did she know the exact time I was not around?

Ummi: *(Surprised)* You girls must be joking. This is a joke, right? *(She turns and looks at Angela and Jamila. Both girls turn their faces away)* Wait! Are you girls accusing me?

Angela: Who knows? Anything is now possible. After all, it was my clothes that were destroyed not yours.

Jamila: That is correct. If you are not with us then...

Angela: *(Completing the sentence)* You are against us.

Ummi: This must definitely be a cruel joke. Of course I am not against you. After all, it was not my boyfriend you snatched.

Angela: *(Claps her hand and laughs sarcastically)* Snatch? Me, snatched whose boyfriend?

Jamila: So? What if she snatched her boyfriend? Thank God you said boyfriend not husband.

Ummi: Look Jamila, I was not talking to you. Moreover, it is not fair. We all know that Azeem is Bukky's only hope. Jamila, you of all people know that he promised to marry her. I don't support her alleged wicked action but we should try to understand how she must have felt. After all we were once all friends.

Angela: (*Hissing*) Friends indeed. You don't support, yet you understand. You are beginning to cry louder than the bereaved. What is your business in all this? Bukky must learn how to handle competition. After all Azeem is a Muslim who is rightfully entitled to four competitive women.

Ummi: For God's sake understand what I am trying to say. (*Persuasively*) Angee you have more boyfriends and sugar daddies than you can handle. So why? Just last week you met Aminu 3.

Angela: They are not enough. They will never be enough because every one of them has his function. Aminu 1, Aminu 2 and Aminu 3 are just few out of my numerous suppliers. (*Boastfully*) Aminu 3 is in charge of my cosmetics. I need to look and smell good at all times. Aminu 2 takes care of foodstuffs and provisions. Aminu 1 is the moneybag. He makes sure that my purse is never dry. (*Turning to Ummi*) Madam it is not fair, remember that you are one of the beneficiaries of their generosity. Abi how many times have you bought foodstuff in this room? (*Lovingly*) Azeem is different. He is not like those old, sweaty, ugly,

moneybags. I mean, he is my dream man, young, handsome and single. For God's sake he is also a popular student politician. My dearest told me he is only going out with the K-bow girl out of pity. Oh! He is so nice. Imagine the sacrifice he is making on behalf of that stupid girl. He only deserves a princess like myself. Oh! A and A-Azeem weds Angee. (*she rhapsodizes dreamingly*) What a perfect match? Don't you think so?

Ummi: Perfect indeed. If you like him that much why are you still keeping so many other men? From the way you are going these Aminus will soon reach a dozen.

Jamila: (*Angrily*) *What is your business? Is it her fault that she is irresistible? Moreover, these men provide for her. I don't blame you. Your rich father keeps you loaded.*

Ummi: Your parents are not paupers either.

Angela: Please keep quiet madam holy-holy! You think we don't know your secret? You keep posing as if you are innocent when we know what you do around.

Ummi: (*Embarrassed*) What? What do you mean by

that Angela?

Jamila: (*Happily*) That is correct! (*Urgently*) Don't mind her, but don't let us forget the major issue. How do we deal with the girl? Or have you forgotten your designer dresses?

Angela: Forget what? She will never escape my punishment. We will discuss further when I return from lecture. Meanwhile, Ummi, I know you are the big mouth...

Ummi: (*Laughing and shaking her head*) What have I done this time around?

Angela: The question is what you have not done. Anyway, I don't want anyone hearing about this, most especially Azeem. He knows I am innocent and perfect. I don't want him thinking otherwise.

Ummi: You, innocent? (*Sarcastically*) Is that not suppose to be me?

Angela: (*Sounding frustrated*) Please, I am very serious about this particular matter. Azeem Moddibo will surely win the election. When he does, I Angela Chat Bakut will become more popular than ever before. (*Clapping*

her fingers) Together, we will become the most powerful and famous couple on campus. So, the sooner I take Bukky out of my perfect picture the better. If you really want to remain my friend, you must promise to stay on my side without any buts.

Jamila: Yes! We have to be sure. Are you with us?

Ummi: (*Kneeling mockingly and laughing*) Yes Madams. (*The girls go out of the room*)

Scene Two

(This scene opens in a large student hall. A lot of boys and girls are seen listening to an address by Azeem. He is a dark looking guy, almost six feet tall and quite a power dresser. He is seen talking to the students who are sitting at every corner of the hall listening to him attentively)

Azeem: Like I said before, we must do everything possible to win this election. I know some of you may want to ask; "why is he taking this election seriously? After all it is just a student union election". Well, my answer to such skeptics is very simple. I say our future depends on this election. Why? Reason is because we are the future of this nation. In order to become what we are destined to become we need people like my humble self who are determined to fight for access to quality education, healthcare and financial support. Our welfare must become a priority to our local, state and federal governments. (Gearing up, he shouts) Great future leaders of our nation!!!

Students: (Excited) Great!!!

Azeem: Greatest FLOON!

Students: Great!!!

Azeem: They say big things start from small. Yes, dear comrades, this is indeed the place to start the struggle that must continue. My record speaks for me. Unlike other candidates contesting for the Student President of this great institution, all the promises I make, I will keep.

Students: (Loudly) We trust you.

Azeem: (Gingered) Trust is a burden. But this burden I will carry effectively. I have made my agenda very clear. If elected as the new president of the student union, I will ensure that this institution provides 24 hours of electricity to all nooks and crannies of this institution.

Students: Ah!!!! You go win!

Azeem: (Energized further) No more dry water taps and empty water tanks. No more insecurity and poverty.

Students: You must win!

stammering. Everybody knows that Danjuma is just a brain box without wit or charm, although I must admit that he is really popular among students.

Azeem: What do you mean by "really popular?" I am the most...

Lekenson: My Presido of course you are popular. What I mean to say is that we have to find a way of curtailing Danjuma because he is not only intelligent, he also has a lot of influence around the campus. Please don't forget that he facilitated the free bus transportation for students. He also helped in... (*Cutting him short*)

Azeem: (*Angrily*) "He also helped in" what? You are suppose to facilitate my winning this election, and not to become the praise singer of my opponents. I don't care what he is able to do here. All I want is just to win this election no matter what!

Lekenson: (*Touching Azeem on the shoulder warmly*) My friend, and win you must no matter what. You do have all that Danjuma can only dream of. You are handsome and charming. All you need to do now is to give

more of today's speech in other gatherings, and I swear you will win the presidency. No doubt!

Azeem: (*Happily*) Excellent! Now you are making better sense. That is wonderful news. Thank you for your support. As usual, Bukky wrote the speech. All I did was to cram the words and deliver it with zeal. (*He laughs*)

Lekenson: Ladies guy! I trust you. That girl is really intelligent and hardworking.

Azeems: Valuable too. Presently she is crafting the speech I intend to deliver at the student electoral committee meeting tomorrow.

Lekenson: (*Excited*) But, but Presido, what about your other girls?

Azeem: (*A bit confused at first*) Oh! Others? (*Laughs*) They are all doing their assignments. Angela thinks she is my number one, so she is seriously mobilizing the girls in the various hostels. Ozavezia is handling students that are living off campus. She believes that she is number one too. Jamila thinks I fancy her. She is very much at



work. So are the others. If that will make them campaign harder for me, why tell them otherwise? (Soberly) You see, I need all the support I can get especially from the ladies ... (Smiling, he continues) It is a man's world but women hold the key to the world. So, the more we have them on our side the merrier.

Lekenson: Well, you are right. Solomon is actually very serious about her. Can't she just help us without...

Azeem: (Angrily) Look here Leke! We are talking about my future here ... I mean our future! If we win this election it will be a window unto greater openings. Politicians need people like us. Do you know how many local government candidates have tried to contact me? This is just the beginning. So, forget about Solo or whatever his name is. Let us focus on the bigger picture. Nothing is too small or too big for this agenda.

Lekenson: (Now fully convinced) Presido! I trust you. Ummi will fall in place. I will work on her.

Azeem: Good! Now you are talking. There is no room for negativity in this agenda. (Looking serious) What about the messenger, has he brought the stuff?

Lekenson: Not yet. He said the road is not clear yet. As soon as the road is clear the documents will be delivered.

Azeem: The man is too slow. We have no time. Those contract documents must go out latest

tomorrow. My... I mean, our campaign has been promised a lot of monetary support by Alhaji Suraj. That can only happen if we deliver the contract requirements to him before it goes public. He knows how these things work around here, yet he wants to mess up. Please! Please!! Tell that messenger to hurry up! (Looks at his wristwatch) It is getting late and I need to see Bukky for my speech. (Angrily) You go and inform the messenger right away to either deliver the stuff or return my money immediately. (They walk out of the hall)

Scene Three

(In front of the boys hostel. It is dark. Standing close to each other in the darkest corner, some distance away from the entrance of the hostel are Ummi and Solomon)

Solomon: (Irritated) Ummi please stop. I am tired of hearing the same old excuses.

Ummi: (Pleading) I know what you think but believe me, that is not it. It is just that... (Frustrated) Oh Sulaiman you know what I mean!

Solomon: What you mean? How should I know what you mean? And for God's sake, my name is Solomon not Sulaiman.

Ummi: But... but it is the same name. Sulaiman means Solomon in Arabic.

Solomon: Yes I understand that. So what is wrong with the English version of my name? Look I allowed you to change my name in the beginning because I understand that you might be a little embarrassed among your friends. But it is two years now. Even the few friends of yours that you managed to mention

Solomon: Leke, Azeem already has our votes. I don't think we have to attend every meeting before the election.

Lekenson: (*Sarcastically*) Take it easy my guy. We actually don't need your presence at any meeting. I was only talking to Ummi.

Solomon: (*Angrily*) Ay! You better watch your mouth, otherwise...

Ummi: (*Moves in between the boys*) Leke, you don't need to be rude.

Solomon: No dear, allow him. Mr. Coordinator, work no pay, go on, insult me because of that ambitious shameless womanizer.

Lekenson: (*Chuckling*) Is that not a pinch of jealousy? Anyway, the Presido to be cannot be blamed for his popularity amongst ladies. He is only a ladies' man. Lest I forget, Ummi, see what you can do about what we discussed earlier. We are counting on you. (*He leaves*)

Ummi: (*Agitated*) Sorry about that...

Solomon: (*Annoyed*) What are those rascals counting on you for?

Ummi: It... it is really nothing. They just want me to support them. That is all.

Solomon: Ummi, please be careful with these campus hustlers. I don't trust them one bit. They are too desperate for my liking.

Ummi: Oh! Mr. Caution. I have heard you. Talking about desperation, do you know that man has come looking for me?

Solomon: Which man?

Ummi: The one I told you about. This time around he came with the boot of his car filled with all sorts of gifts. Imagine the old fool. (*She noticed that Solomon is deep in thought and seemed not to be listening to her. She taps his arm*) What are you thinking about? (*Annoyed*) You are not even listening to me.

Solomon: (*Turning to face her*) Sorry about that. It is just that I am not so sure of... anyway, didn't I ask you to tell him never to bother you again?

Ummi: I did more than that. I even insulted the idiot. I am very surprised that he still came. The fool apparently has no pride. He claimed that

my dad asked him to visit me on his behalf. I doubt it since my dad already sent his driver as usual.

Solomon: (*Touching his head*) I don't want to think about or discuss the situation right now.

Ummi: Are you all right dear?

Solomon: It is just a headache.

Ummi: You better leave now. I think you need to rest. I will see you tomorrow.

Solomon: Why do I think you just want me gone?

Ummi: (*Laughing*) Oh! If that is what you think, please stay. I will go into the hostel when am tired.

Solomon: Don't worry, I am leaving now. See you tomorrow. Please stay away from those guys.

Ummi: I heard you loud and clear. Good night.
(Solomon leaves while Ummi walks into the hostel)

Act Two

Scene One

(The Vice Chancellor's Secretary's Office. The office is adjoining the VC's office. In the office are tables and chairs with computers and several folders and papers. The Secretary is seen angrily punching the keys of her computer. Close to the door into the VC's office is the messenger sitting impatiently as if waiting for someone to come out of the office.)

Secretary: (Stops typing) Mallam, why did you allow her inside?

Messanger: Madam, the girl push me nah! Wallahi I go abuse am wen she come out!

Secretary: When she comes out? Now I know you are one of those that want to put me in trouble in this office (hissing) Didn't Oga say that these girls should not be allowed to enter his office?

Messenger: Ah! Madam, I tell am oh! She say na oga say make she come. Before I finish talk, na ehm she push me pass.

Secretary: Please stop lying. As old as you are, you can still lie openly. You think I did not see her giving you money?

Messenger: Money? No Madam. She just shake my hand with kola.

Secretary: (Hissing) I thought you said she pushed you.

Messenger: Madam na the same thing. She say she no go tay. I no know wetin dey keep her since.

(Mr. Johnson walks in wearing a three-piece suit with a briefcase in hand)

Mr. Johnson: Hello Madam. Can I see the VC?

Secretary: Good afternoon Mr. Johnson. He is busy now, please sit down and wait.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you. Hope the messenger gave you my message.

Secretary: Message? Which message?

Mr. Johnson: But I gave...

Messenger: (Talking fast) Yes, na true. Madam you no

dey wen him come. No worries I don deliver the message. (*Laughing cunningly*) Oga you never still give me the transport for the message oh!

Mr. Johnson: Mallam Barau, don't be greedy, transport to go next door? After all I normally see you even when you do me no favour.

Messenger: Ah! Oga you dey try, I just dey joke wen...

Secretary: (*Angrily*) Mallam, do I need to remind you of your job? You are just a messenger in this office not a secretary.

Messenger: Who say I be secretary? Oga Johnson I beg I say I be secretary?

Secretary: Just let this be the last time. Whatever message comes for the VC in my absence you must wait for me.

Messenger: Yes madam, I don hear. No bi my fault, na oga Johnson say the message for VC na urgency, urgency. (*Smiling*) I swear, ask am madam, him no give me any kola.

Secretary: (*Hissing*) That is your business. The one you collected from engineer, did you give me?

Messenger: (*Surprised*) I... (*Smiling*) My madam, my madam, I go still see you. I swear I forget.

Mr. Johnson: Mallam, I thought I instructed you to give it to the secretary for onward delivery to the VC. The package is very important.

Messenger: Haba Oga! I no be small pickin. I don spend 45 years for this office. 8 VC don come, them don go leave me for this office. No bi my fault. Na Madam Secretary dey comot no dey come back on time.

Secretary: (*Quickly interrupting him*) Mallam, enough of the long story. Nobody is asking for a lecture. (*Turns to Mr. Johnson*) Sorry Mr. Johnson. Don't worry; he must have delivered your message. But, next time wait to see me personally.

(A middle-aged woman walks into the office)

Messenger: (*Gets up quickly*) Good afternoon, Hajiya.

Secretary: Welcome Madam.

Hajiya: (*Ignoring their greetings. She turns to the secretary*) Is my husband in?

Messenger: (*Jumping in*) Hajiya, him dey. But he get visitor.

Secretary: (*Shouting at him*) Mallam Barau!

Messenger: (*Shocked*) Yes madam.

Secretary: (*Turning to Hajiya*) Sorry madam. There is someone inside the office. But please, sit down. I am sure he will soon be free.

Hajiya: (*A hint of irritation in her voice*) Let him know that I am around. His phone line seems to be out of service. (*She sits down on the nearest chair. Just then, the lady in the VC's office comes out*)

Messenger: (*Gets up quickly, smiling*) Aunty you don finish?

Lady: Yes. He asked me to check back next week. Thank you. See you then (*She walks out without acknowledging the secretary*)

Secretary: (*Hissing*) Hajiya, you can go in now.

Hajiya: (*Angrily*) Is that teenager the visitor I was suppose to wait for? (*She hisses and angrily walks into the VC's office*)

Secretary: (*Hissing*) Mallam, Barau I will make sure you lose your job before Oga's wife opens her big mouth again.

Messenger: But madam, na oga talk say make people come inside him office one by one.

Secretary: (*Angrily*) It is not her fault. If I had furthered my education, she would have been a messenger in my office. Imagine that village woman. She thinks we don't know her story.

Mr. Johnson: Madam, take it easy. She actually has a point.

Secretary: Point? Which point?

Mr. Johnson: Why should you allow that small girl to waste our time ... my time, I mean, I have spent over 15 minutes waiting for a girl that probably has no business here. She is not only badly dressed, she is also without

Mr. Johnson: (*Still shocked*) Is this a joke? You mean she is actually your daughter?

Messenger: (*Trying to control his laughter*) Oga, ha madam born her true-true.

Bukky: (*Irritated*) Mummy why is he calling me names?

Secretary: Don't mind him my dear. It is just a misunderstanding. He happens to be one of those village men who think young ladies should dress like grandmothers.

Bukky: (*Turning round*) What is wrong with what I am wearing mum?

Secretary: Nothing my dear. The man should just mind his business.

Mr. Johnson: (*Baffled*) What an irony! I would have sworn that her parents are a thousand kilometers away from here. So you are here and you can see her. Those who live in glass houses must not throw stones. Yet, you just insulted someone's daughter while you encourage your own to do worse. What a mother!

Secretary: (*Furious*) Mr. Johnson, you better watch your mouth. How dare you call my daughter names in my presence? Useless man, what is your business concerning what my daughter choose to wear? (*Hissing*) I know your type. You are one of those men that come into this institution to molest our children!

Mr. Johnson: (*Angrily*) Madam, enough is enough!

Messenger: Madam I beg take am easy. Abi una dey fight before?

Bukky: (*Looking at Mr. Johnson rudely*) Mummy, it is okay. (*She moves closer to her mother*) I have good news for you. (*She moves even closer and starts to whisper into her mother's ear. Mallam Barau also moves closer and is pushed away by the Secretary*)

Secretary: (*Her mood changes*) Ah! That is very good my dear. So you mean...

Bukky: (*Looking around she snares rudely at Mr. Johnson*) Mum, please not here! We will discuss further at home. (*Turns to mallam Barau*) Mallam I have a message for you. (*They move to the farthest corner of the office*)

Messenger: (Nodding his head continuously) No problem!

Scene Two

Bukky: (She moves to her mother) See you at home mum. (As she leaves, Hajiya comes out of the office)

Hajiya: (Turns to the Secretary) Do you mind keeping your voices down. This is not a market place.

Secretary: Yes madam! Sorry madam!

Hajiya: Your employer wants to see you and the messenger right away. (She walks out. The secretary and messenger worriedly move into the VC's office while Mr. Johnson waits angrily)

(A parking space not far away from the female hostel. There are lots of cars. Some people are seen inside their cars while others are sitting or leaning on theirs. Beside a white Mercedes is Alhaji Tanko. He is dressed in white babbanriga with a matching cap. The attire does well in hiding his protruding belly. He had earlier sent a porter to room 2/15. He seems eager, waiting for word)

Alhaji: (Sights the porter coming towards him. He asks hurriedly) Is she around?

Porter: (Smiling) Rankayadade, your daughter is around. She said she is coming.

Alhaji: Thank you very much (He turns away to arrange his babbanriga and to assess his reflection in the rear window of his white Mercedes. The slight cough of the porter makes him turn around) Oh! Sorry my friend. (He brings out some money from the chest pocket of his babbanriga) Here, please manage this!

Porter: Ah! Alhaji, this is too much! May God reward

you! Thank you very much! (Ummi appears. The porter turns to her) Aunty please help me thank your father. He is too kind.

Alhaji:

You are right. (Confidently) I promise you, she will change her mind about me. By the time she sees how well I take care of you, all that will be water under the bridge. (He moves closer to her) I hope you received my gifts last week. (Ummi nods) Good! I assigned Larai my first wife to buy them. She has fine taste when it comes to gold. What I dislike about her is actually her food. She is such a bad cook, a terrible cook. That was why I married Binta who can cook but turns out to be extremely dirty. (Hissing) Amina my third wife is much better. If only she would talk less. She is such a talkative woman. That woman talks like a parrot. I always end up with a migraine whenever I am with her. That is why I always enjoy visiting you. (He places his hand on her arm and lowers his voice) Ummi, you are all I ever wish for. The thought of you gladdens my heart and gives me the peace I need. With your beauty and education and my wealth, together we can conquer the world. Being with you makes me feel thirty years younger and... (Ummi withdraws her arm)

Ummi: (Taken aback) No problem, thank you. (The porter leaves) My father? Come to think of it. I might as well call you father.

Alhaji: Haba Ummi! Not even a welcome greeting?

Ummi: Sorry. How was your journey?

Alhaji: (Smiling) Fine! Very fine!

Ummi: And your family?

Alhaji: They are doing fine. I visited your father and younger ones before coming. They send their regards.

Ummi: Thank you. What about my mother?

Alhaji: (Hesitating) Well... I didn't see her. She still doesn't want to see me.

Ummi: (Laughing) Do you blame her? She is only worried about my fate. Which good mother won't be?

Ummi: Is that so?

Alhaji: Yes my dear. I swear I have never felt this way before. You are the centre of my world. Those women are just mothers of my children. They mean little to me. You...

Ummi: (*She interrupts him*) Please, please! I have heard enough about your wives. Kindly don't ever send them to buy any thing for me again. No wonder, (*she slaps her hands*) the jewelry was so ugly and paperweight.

Alhaji: (*Surprised*) Really? I am so sorry my dear. I will make sure I buy it myself next time. Better still, we should go shopping together.

Ummi: (*Happily*) That is a better idea. So what did you bring for me this time? Hope you brought everything complete.

Alhaji: Don't worry. I have come fully loaded. Just direct me to the most expensive shopping mall in town, you can pick whatever you like.

Ummi: (*Ecstatic*) Oh! I... (*someone taps her from behind. She turns quickly, frightened*) Ah! Jamila it is you. (*A sigh of relief*)

Jamila: Who were you expecting?

Ummi: Nobody... I will see you...

Jamila: Won't you introduce me to your...

Ummi: (*Reluctantly*) Alhaji, this is my roommate Jamila.

Alhaji: Lovely name. Why don't you join us? We were just going out to do some shopping.

Ummi: (*Nervously*) No! I am sure she has other things to do. Don't you Jamila?

Jamila: Actually, I don't. But it seems you don't want me around. (*Sarcastically*) I wonder why? Who did you say this gentleman is?

Alhaji: Oh! Sorry. She didn't introduce me. I am... (*Ummi interrupts him*)

Ummi: He is my (*visibly shaken and hesitant*)... uncle. So, see you when I get back. (*She turns her back on Jamila*)

Jamila: (*Looks at Alhaji Tanko, who is obviously in shock*) Really? Anyway, I wish you happy shopping. (*Turns to Alhaji sarcastically*)

Please take care of your niece. (*She leaves*)

Ummi: (*Angrily*) Stupid girl. Please, don't mind her.

Alhaji: (*Still in shock*) Did you just call me your uncle?

Ummi: Well... Yes I did. I have no choice.

Alhaji: (*Furiously*) What do you mean, you have no choice? Look Ummi, I am not a child. I am old enough to be your father and I will not have you humiliate me in the presence of your friends.

Ummi: Oh! So you know that you are old enough to be my father. Thank God you know. Why should I marry you?

Alhaji: (*Scared*) My dear, don't talk like that. It is just that I ...

Ummi: I said I have no choice but you keep insisting.

Alhaji: I am very sorry my dear.

Ummi: Jamila is one of those that have been trying to convince me not to marry you.

Alhaji: (*Surprised*) You don't mean it?

Ummi: Yes, I do. They say I am too young and too beautiful to be married to a man old enough to be my father. Not only that, they say money is not everything, that I should marry a young single man who will take better care of me. (*Upset*) But...but how... how can I convince them that I love you despite...despite the fact that you are old enough to be my father and I will be your...your fourth wife. That is why I ... (*Alhaji moves closer to her*) We must keep our love a secret from them. Otherwise, I know they might convince me and I don't want to break your heart.

Alhaji: (*Angrily*) Never! I will never allow that to happen. You are right as always my dear. Oh! Please don't be downcast. Come; let's be on our way. I will make you really happy today. (*He opens the passenger side of his car and closed the door as soon as she settles inside the car. Repairing his flowing babanriga, he rushes to the driver's seat and drives away*)

Scene Three

(Angela's room in the female hostel. She is seen pacing up and down the room. She runs into the wardrobe when she hears an approaching脚步声. Jamila enters the room)

Jamila: (Whispering) Angela! Angela!! (She moves into the room) Where are you?

Angela: (Comes out of her hiding place) Thank God it is you. I thought... Jamila, they said...

Jamila: That Bukky has reported you to security? Yes, not only that, her mother is the VC's secretary. So now, your file might be on his table.

Angela: But why didn't you warn me before now? God! What do we do?

Jamila: (Surprised) What do we do? I am sure you mean, what will you do. Please it is you, not we!

Angela: But you advised me to... (Brazing herself) It doesn't matter now. After all, she started it. I

just paid her with her own coin. Let her do her worse. In fact, let the VC himself be her mother. I don't care. She destroyed my clothes, and I destroyed her own, simple.

Jamila: They said she is more upset about her missing books.

Angela: (Angrily) How was she able to connect me with that too? I thought you said nobody saw us. The book thing is not my idea. That was your idea. I didn't want to touch her books. I just wanted her to suffer the same way she made me suffer.

Jamila: (Puzzled) What do you mean, my idea? I only suggested that you hide the books for a while. I didn't ask you to burn them. (Thinking) Of course nobody saw us. She is not stupid you know. She knows whom to suspect!

Angela: Please... please stop complicating everything! Nobody saw us, so she has no proof. (Relieved, she turns and stares at Jamila suspiciously) I hope you don't intend to give me up.

Jamila: Why should I do such a thing? I am with you.

(Hesitates) It's just that... I can't afford to be in any problem right now. You know how wicked my aunty is. If she hears of my involvement in any skirmish I can as well say goodbye to my studies.

Angela: How will she get to know? Do you intend to inform her?

Jamila: Inform her? Am I crazy? Looking at the way the whole thing is going, I pray that it doesn't degenerate into something else.

Angela: Don't worry, I have already started making plans just in case. I just hope that I conclude my plans before anything happens. Azeem is with me hundred percent. If she dares anything stupid, Azeem will deal with her. *(She pauses and then utters) She has no proof against us. After all, we are in the process of a political campaign. Azeem's opponents might be responsible. He said so himself, so relax.*

Jamila: If you say so. But... *(Urgent footstep is heard. Angela dashes into the wardrobe while Jamila hides behind the door. Ummi enters the room)*

Ummi: *(Calling out) Jamila, Angela. Where are these girls?*

Jamila: *(Hissing) Please lower your voice, we are here.*

Angela: *(Comes out of the wardrobe) What is it?*

Ummi: Some security men are asking of you outside. Who did you fight with this time around?

Angela: *(Anxiously) Security men? What did you tell them?*

Jamila: *(Sobbing) I am in trouble. Angela, please don't mention my name.*

Ummi: *(Surprised) Trouble? What trouble?*

Angela: *(Eagerly) Please answer me! What did you tell them?*

Ummi: *(Confused) Nothing! They just asked me to call you. They are waiting downstairs. What did you girls do again? (Turning to Jamila) What did you do?*

Angela: *(Trying hard to stay calm despite being visibly shaken) Let us relax. There is no trouble. Jamila let us go.*

Jamila: (Forcefully) No! They didn't ask of me. It is you they want to see. (Trying to convince her) If we both go out they might become suspicious, so just go alone and pretend that you know nothing.

Angela: (Not fully convinced) Okay! I ... I will go. (Brazing herself, she takes a deep breath, puts on a brave face and walks out of the room)

Ummi: (Worried) Jamila, what did she do? I hope this has nothing to do with Bukky's clothes and stolen books? (Looks at Jamila who continues to sob) Oh! My God, you mean you people actually...

Jamila: (Shouts at her) Please keep quiet! Just mind your own business, madam pretender. (She turns away from Ummi and covers her face with her palms. While Ummi sits down on the bed slowly, wondering)

Act Three



Scene One

(In front of the female hostel. Solomon and Ummi are seen arguing heatedly)

Solomon: (Angrily) How do you expect me to believe you? I am tired of your excuses.

Ummi: (Agitated) How many times do I have to explain myself to you? I have never welcomed the man. He only comes to see me at my father's request. What do you expect me to do in that case? Embarrass him? He is my father's guest for God's sake.

Solomon: Your father's guest. This is the more reason why you should avoid him, Ummi, that man is a snake. I know how men like him can take advantage of young girls like you. Please Ummi, promise that you will avoid him completely. (Quietly) If only you will let me visit you at home. (Urgently) At least, let me meet your mother, I am sure...

Ummi: (Cutting him off) My mother? Forget her! She is more conservative than my father. I

think she likes Alhaji Tanko, she said so to my hearing.

Solomon: But for God's sake the man is old enough to be your father. He has been married about seven times already.

Ummi: (Shaking her head) No! Eight times, he presently has three wives though. He just divorced the fourth wife two months ago.

Solomon: And you are expected to fill up the existing gap?

Ummi: God forbid! Me? Never! I will rather die.

Solomon: (Holding her) Please don't say that my love. It makes my heart ache. The thought of losing you to another man is painful enough. Please don't talk about death. (Changing the topic) So, how far with your roommate? Has she been released from the security office?

Ummi: (Sadly) Angela will never learn. The case is now entering its fourth week. She has missed all her examinations already. If only she had listened to me.

Solomon: (Surprised) But I thought you said Angela's

father has come to plead with the VC on her behalf.

Ummi: (Laughing) Father? Don't mind the girl. She invited Aminu 1 to act as her father, unfortunately, apart from her name, he knows next to nothing about her.

Solomon: What? Aminu who?

Ummi: It is a long story.

Solomon: But what do you think happened during the encounter?

Ummi: That is pretty easy, I hope you are good at acting?

Solomon: (Surprised) Acting? What for?

Ummi: (Laughing) Yes! We can simply act out the encounter. You be the VC while I act as Aminu 1 and Angela.

Solomon: Two characters? Hope you will not get me confused.

Ummi: Don't worry. I can handle it. Remember I took drama classes.

(During this interval, Ummi adjusts her posture, clears her throat while Solomon protrudes his stomach and mimics the VC)

VC: Please have a sit.

Aminu 1: Thank you. (He sits in the chair opposite the VC)

VC: Sorry for summoning you on short notice, Mr...

Aminu 1: I am Mallam Aminu Sadah.

(Tries to hide his surprise) Oh! Mallam Aminu... I am sure you are a busy man. We all are. But the issue at hand is a very serious one. You see, the founders of this great university established it with the hope of grooming students who are sound in both character and learning. Please mark the sequence of my words: character and learning. Thus, this university, of course in accordance with the wishes of its founding fathers, has zero tolerance for indiscipline and ruthless behaviour. (He calls the messenger) Barau!

Messenger: (Rushes in) Yes Sir.

VC:

I wonder why this is coming as a surprise to you; given the fact that you said you are her guardian. Anyway, her over-stay in this university is not the major reason why you are here. Angela destroyed the clothes and books of a student. The girl's name is Bukola Onifade a 300 level student of Political Science. All her textbooks and lecture notes were burnt completely by your ward. She was seen setting some books ablaze behind the female hostel. Further investigation revealed that the books were the ones Bukola earlier reported missing. Apparently they had earlier fought over a male student called Azeem.

Aminu 1:

A boy? You mean... (*turns to Angela*) but you said (*Angela turns away*) Oh! So all this while you have been having affairs with another person.

VC:

She accused Bukola of sabotage but she has no witness. However, several students who have testified against her saw her set the books ablaze. Anyway, I am sorry to inform you that the university Disciplinary Committee has withdrawn her from this university. As her guardian, you are to pay fine of 100 thousand naira only.

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Aminu 1: (*Angrily*) I thought you said she has been withdrawn. Is that not enough?

VC:

Don't get me wrong okay? She was withdrawn because of her violations of the university codes of conduct. Not only that, her studentship expired about 3 years ago. The money is of course compensation to the victim. -

Aminu 1: I ... well, Mr. VC Sir, I must confess, I ... I actually, I am not her guardian.

VC:

So you are her father after all.

Aminu 1: (*Gets up angrily*) God forbid. I am not her father. In fact, I don't know her. She just approached me and asked me to assist her.

VC:

Assist her? So you mean you are an imposter.

Aminu 1: I am so sorry, Sir.

VC:

(*Picks up his phone and dials it*) Barau (*He quickly gets to his feet*) Stay by the door (*Speaks silently, on the phone*)

Angela: (*Angrily*) Aminu what is the meaning of this? Coward! (*Ummi and Solomon burst out*)

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laughing. They both come out of their character)

Ummi: Poor man. He slept in a police cell that day.
(As they laugh they did not notice Bukky staring at them)

Bukky: I hope you people are not going mad.

Ummi: Ah! It is you. We were just acting a little drama.

Bukky: The ones in the sanitarium and on the streets also think they are just acting.

Solomon: *(Smiling)* Don't mind us! We were just re-enacting Angela's stunt with the VC.

Bukky: *(Sad)* Oh! I thought she was your friend, yet...

Ummi: Yes, but she never listened to me. I advised her not to take the law into her hands. I told her to report the case of her torn clothes to the University Security Unit but she refused. Good riddance as far as I am concerned.

Bukky: *(Shaking her head)* I honestly had nothing to

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do with her torn clothes. Why would I do that? I have no reason whatsoever. Even though she was mean and hateful towards me, I never wish her bad.

Solomon: So if you didn't tear her clothes then who did?

Bukky: I honestly don't know. But I suspect someone close to her who wants to cause further problems between us. *(She looks at Ummi suspiciously)*

Ummi: *(Shocked)* How dare you? Of course you know I have nothing to do with that. It is not me but maybe... *(Thinking)* Is it possible that ...

Solomon: That what?

Ummi: *(Looks worried)* Never mind...

Bukky: But Ummi, what kind of person steals a school bag filled with books and burns the whole thing? She knows that our examination is fast approaching and she goes ahead with her wicked act. Anyway, we shall all reap what we sow.

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Solomon: Indeed! The saga appeared in the front page of the Student Bulletin. I am only sorry that people will assume that university girls are all the same.

Bukky: God forbid! I am not in their group. (*Looks at Ummi then sarcastically*) But some birds of a feather...

Ummi: (*Angry*) What do you mean?

Bukky: (*Laughing*) Why are you being hypersensitive? They say "show me your friends and..."

Ummi (*Annoyed*) Enough! I have heard enough of your preaching. Please leave me alone (*Bukky smiles and walks away while Solomon and Ummi continue their conversation*)

Scene Two

(*The car park close to the female hostel. Alhaji Tanko is seen talking and laughing with Jamila. Ummi joins them where they are standing*)

Ummi: (*Angrily*) Jamila, what are you doing here? How dare you? You better leave right now before I lose my temper. So everything I heard about you is true. (*Turns to Alhaji*) Please ask this girl to leave now!

Alhaji: Ummi, you need to calm down.

Ummi: (*Hissing*) No I will not, not until she leaves. Why is she still standing next to you?

Jamila: (*Laughing*) My dear let her know who really needs to leave.

Alhaji: Ummi please you have to excuse us.

Ummi: (*Infuriated*) What! Alhaji what do you mean. Is this a joke? Jamila so you have succeeded in hypnotizing him. Why are you so wicked? You pushed Angela into trouble and you later abandoned her. (*Thinking*) No! This

can't be happening? Did you tear the clothes and framed Bukky? My God! It was you!

Jamila: (Laughing) You must be out of your mind. Angela deserved what happened to her. I didn't ask her to be violent. As for Alhaji, I have already told him about your deceptive nature. So don't waste your time pretending. He knows everything.

Ummi: (Angry) Knows what? I swear you won't get away with this... (Ummi launches forward and grabs Jamila by the throat. The girls start to fight. Alhaji tries to separate them to no avail. Before long, the girls were rolling on the ground, their clothes torn to shred, hair and body turn dusty and dirty. A lot of people gather around, some try to end the fight while others just enjoy the fight. The crowd finally separates the girls)

Ummi: (Shouting) I swear I will deal with you. So you think you can take Alhaji away from me, you must be crazy. I ...

Jamila: (Out of breath but shouts to the hearing of everyone) You are the one that is insane. You better go and look for someone else to deceive. Your game is up. I have told him

about all your lies, you ungrateful girl. And you have the audacity to accuse me of anything, you filthy pretender. (Alhaji holds Jamila and tries to dust her dress for her)

Ummi:

You double crossing... (She suddenly stops because facing her among the crowd is Solomon. He has been standing there shocked and speechless. She covers her face and starts to sob)

Solomon: (Devastated) So, it is true. How can you do this to me? I gave you everything. You took me for a fool, and you betrayed me. (He turns and walks away. Meanwhile Alhaji and Jamila drive away in Alhaji's white Mercedes. The crowd starts to disperse while Ummi continues to cry helplessly)

Scene Three

(Inside the student hall. The hall is filled with so many students. Some sit on the available chairs while others stand. The students constantly cheer as speaker after speaker move to the podium to address them. Lekenson is seen walking actively towards the podium. As he stands in front of the students a lot of them cheer him on while some boo him)

Lekenson: (Calming the students down by raising his hands. As soon as the crowd is a bit silent he shouts) Great FLOON!

Students: (Excited) Great!!!

Lekenson: Greatest FLOON!

Students: Great!!!

Lekenson: Today is a historical day. In the next 5 hours we all will vote for the next Student President of this great university. We are not only going to vote, we are all going to vote for the right candidate. A candidate that will represent us, represent our interest and promote our rights. That candidate is

nobody else but Azeem Danbaba.

Students: (Shouting) Azeem! Azeem!! Azeem!!!

Lekenson: (Calming the students) We must not waste valuable time. I know we are all eager to hear from the horse's mouth. It is therefore my honour to introduce the student's choice. Ladies and gentlemen... (He is distracted by the appearance of six uniformed security men. With the security men is the VC's messenger Mallam Barau. The messenger is seen pointing at Azeem, Jamila and Lekenson. The identified persons are moved to join Lekenson on the podium by the security men. There is confusion and uproar amongst the students. One of the security men addresses the students)

Security Man: (With a firm voice) Ladies and gentlemen, sorry to interrupt your rally. But the university security unit wants the people on this podium to come to the office immediately.

Students: (Shouting) No! No! (They all move towards the podium and block the security men from moving)

Students: Great!!!

Student 1: Today is a sad day for our union. I believe in the rule of law, and so, I want the law to take its course. If Azeem and the rest of them are guilty then they must face the full wrath of the law. (*Loudly*) We are the leaders of the future and we... (*looking around him*) we all must live and lead by example. We accuse government officials of corruption, yet we are even more corrupt. We don't want a con artist as our student leader. We do not need irresponsible people to lead us. (*Raising his hand up. He shouts*) I say no to corrupt leaders!

Students: (*All at once*) No to corrupt leaders!

Student 1: We must now search for a credible and reasonable person to replace Azeem Danbaba.

Student 2: What do you mean replace him? (*Angrily*) No! We must give him the chance to at least tell us his own side of the story before condemning him.

Student 3: (*Impatiently*) What chance? We all know him as a liar and a fraud. It was Lekenson

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that was busy shoving him down our throats. Criminal students like him are often rusticated and blacklisted from gaining admission into any institution. Now that the law has caught up with Azeem, I hope that other students will learn that criminals have no place in this great institution of ours.

Student 1: This is our chance to elect the credible leader that we all deserve. I say we vote for Danjuma!

Student 3: (*Excited*) Yes! (*Addressing the crowd*) Look no further. A credible leader is among us. Let us vote for Danjuma.

Students: (*Shouting*) We want Danju! Give us Danju! We want Danjuma! (*Danjuma who was waiting patiently for his turn to speak at the rally looked surprised as he is raised shoulder high by several students to the podium while the other students cheer him on*)

The End

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About the Play

Written in a simple and humorous manner, *Hustlers* is a story about life on Campus. It reflects the intricacy of academic life and the struggle to belong, which is often accompanied with pretense and secrecy. These are seen in the actions of the characters (students, parents and the school authorities). While social, educational and political maneuvers thrive, the value of being worthy in character and learning always triumph. This is the message of the play.



The Playwright

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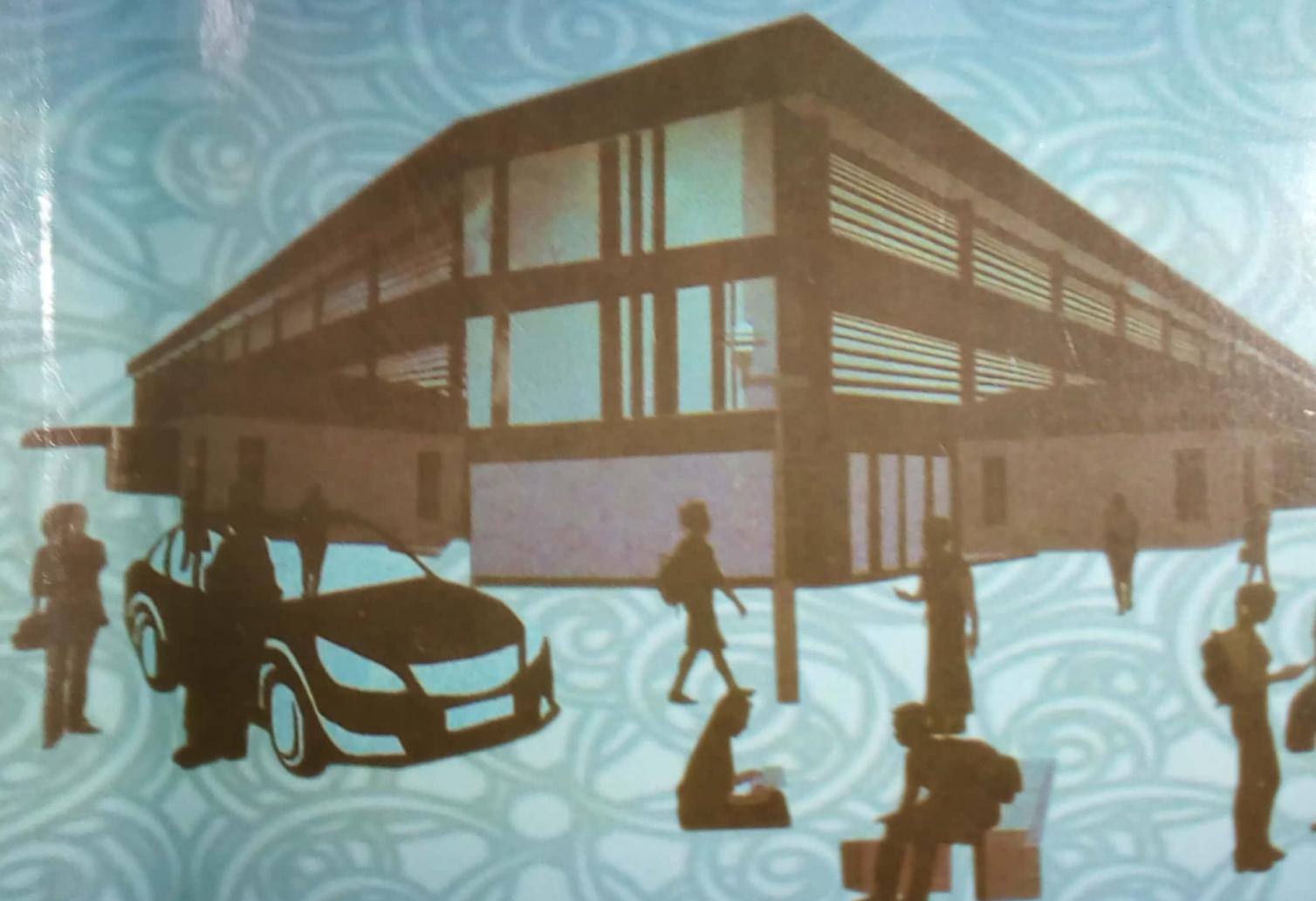
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Hustlers



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