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In the Collection, Talkville City Metered Taxis Inc., Dr. James Jijide use modern African urban superstition and legends to search and get to the mind, soul, and motives which drive human behavior and relationships and out of which emerge virtue and vice, greed and generosity. Humans, animals, nature and unnatural forces are the protagonists and antagonists in murder, fetichism, human parts trade, drugs, human trafficking, violence, adultery, deceit, ghosts, witchcraft, blackmail, and animal sacrifice. Through the stories, the Collection brings men and women face to face with the invisible, powerful and mysterious forces of nature and thereby exposing man's vulnerability and fragility when confronted by angry forces of the universe after man has intentionally provoked them. Finally, in Talkville City Metered Taxis Inc., Dr. James Jijide, shows that amidst the havoc, chaos, tragedy and tears in men's affairs, there is always an occasion for salvation and an opportunity for laughing.

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Talkville City Metered Taxis Inc. • Dr. James Jijide

Talkville City Metered Taxis Inc.



by
Dr. James Jijide

Talkville City Metered Taxis Inc.

Tales of Urban Drama, Horror, Terror, Suspense, Mystery,
Myth, Scandal, Comedy and Splendour

by

Dr. James Jijide



Fultus™ Books



Talkville City Metered Taxis Inc.

Dr. James Jijide

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*Dedicated to all the men and all the women whose observations, experiences,
and wisdom as metered city taxi drivers or as metered city taxi passengers
inspired the stories contained in this Collection.*

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Preface

The main message contained in the main themes of the stories in this Collection is that man, nature, the elements, the animal kingdom, the plant species and the supernatural forces are all, for good or for bad, linked together in the determination of their destinies. In that sense, no creation is better or worse than the other. All need each other for survival. The second message is that the material and non-material worlds are in constant interaction, with one always exercising profound influence over the other and vice versa and anyone who ignores this reality does so at his or her own peril. Talkville city metered taxis inc. also tries to convey the message that because of the scheming, wealth, social standing, influence and the power which they wield in the world, some villains get away with murder while many heroes and heroines fall victims of circumstances and are punished for evils or mistakes they never committed. But, the message continues, in that context the forces of nature and poetic justice intervene to mete out ultimate justice to the wrong-doers who have succeeded in escaping human forms of punishment just as the righteous are also duly rewarded by the same forces in the end. Forthly, through its stories, Talkville City Metered Taxis Inc. conveys the message that the unwanton abuse of nature and the senseless exploitation of animals for selfish human ends do not go unpunished. Nature and the animal kingdom hit back hard. Finally, the Collection tries to convince individuals and the corporate world that they have a responsibility in contributing towards the taking care of the needy in their society.

Series B.

Tales of Urban Legends, Puzzle and Mystery

Story №19.

Human Cry from the Vehicle Engine and Grinding-Mill

For nearly two years running, many passengers who had hired TCMTI taxi №10 claimed to have heard the shrill human cry 'Help, help I'm now tired and can't pull anymore, please' coming directly from the engine of the taxi №10 driven, for 11 years, by the 46 year-old Jerry.

The shrill human cry did not, apparently, have a timetable but it traced a recognizable pattern. It came at the end of the day, week or month, most probably after the taxi had been hired several times. The passengers also claimed that the cry came just before or after their embarking or disembarking, at such a timing that it would be within their earshot and that of Jerry. The passengers also alleged that the cry always repeated itself thrice soon after the engine had just been switched off or just before it had been switched on. In other words, the cry would be loud and clear enough for everybody to hear and understand. Finally, the passengers remarked that at the cry, Jerry would look terribly and strangely disturbed and would try every trick in the book to muffle the cry, by sometimes unnecessarily blowing the hooter of the car by increasing the volume on the car radio, depending on when the cry had come.

350 kilometers from Talkville, upcountry, in his home village of Tondi, Jerry owned a diesel-operated grinding-mill. It served all the members of the surrounding communities lying within a 10 kilometer radius or more. It had been in service under his ownership for well over 5 years. The villagers popularly called it the 'JR grinding-mill.'

However, some villagers living near and around Tondi also claimed that for the past two years, they had been hearing what they figured out to be the shrill human cry ' Help, help, I'm exhausted, and can't grind anymore, please' when at the grinding-mill. The villagers claimed that this distinct cry always came after the mill had been running the whole day.

Whenever it happened, the mill minders looked puzzled and unsettled.

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Two years after Jerry had joined TCMTI as the driver of taxi №10, he had bought this grinding-mill in Talkville and had had it transported all the way to Tondi to render business service to his homestead and the neighboring villages. There was tremendous rejoicing at this development in the village and around, as the mill had brought big relief to many families who, till then, had been forced to walk many distances, sometimes as long as 20 kilometers to reach the nearest grinding-mill away from home. The JR grinding-mill had also brought pride and honor to the Nkosani clan.

Their son had done and made it. Naturally, there were those who frowned at this achievement and said all sorts of unkind words about Jerry and his people but the mill continued to grind kilograms upon kilograms of corn meal to feed hundreds upon hundreds of men, women and children.

One weekend Jerry was at home in the village when a maternal uncle of his, elder brother to his mother, visited him. In their chat, the uncle's conversation slowly took the direction of the subjects of sorcery and witchcraft and he painted a very frightening picture of the evil machinations of people who were not happy to see other people's businesses grow and how they stifled other people's efforts.

'People are terrible. Never trust anybody and since you don't know what's around the next corner, it's better to be prepared all the time and in advance before they attack and destroy you,' he advised emphatically.

'What and how do you mean, Uncle?' Jerry asked

'I mean, 'fortify' your grinding-mill so that it can make more business and so that no one around here can compete with you. That's what I mean, boy.'

It was this advice, which later turned out, in both its detail and application, to be ill advice, to visit what also later turned out to be a fake medicine woman, to consult on the best business and professional practices at the grinding-mill and at TCMTI respectively, that led one evil thing to another evil thing.

'You need to ensure that your grinding-mill is a crowd puller and that you personally are protected against all malice from your enemies,' he

repeated. 'At work, you must also ensure that you are safe from accidents, bad luck and from competition for hires and promotions organized by your workmates.'

'I'm not familiar with these things, Uncle, honestly,' hesitated Jerry.

'I'll show you the way, you son of my baby-sister Stella' he replied firmly and confidently.

With these words Jerry was eventually led to the bogus medicine woman who would be the source of all his future troubles and by the time he realized it, irreversible damage of great evil proportions had already been inflicted.

Following the discussions he had with his uncle, Jerry took every opportunity of his spare time to travel north to his home village, Tondi, to continue these discussions in detail. Even the Tondi villagers observed that for two good years, one would never see the uncle without his nephew by his side. Some villagers also claimed seeing the pair in odd places at night, going in or coming from this or that direction as if they were looking for something.

And indeed they were looking for something. The bogus medicine woman had told them to hunt for a healthy young man aged between 18 and 20, strong, sturdy and muscular. The medicine woman needed the young man's muscular tissue to mix with some potent herbal leaves. The mixture would be boiled for one hour until all the muscle tissue and the herbal leaves had really thoroughly blended into each other. Jerry would need two liters of the mixture to pour into the empty radiator of his TCMTI taxi №10 and the rest he would sprinkle inside his car, the floor, the seats and the ceiling. The mixture would increase his taxi's horse power by 5-fold and also enhance its chances of being hired ten-fold. He would pour the same mixture into the ventilation chambers of his grinding-mill and sprinkle the rest of the mixture on the walls, floor and at the entrance of the mill's building. This ritual would guarantee good mechanical performance of the grinding-mill and would attract many customers to it. No other business person would have the inclination or thought of establishing a competing grinding-mill in the whole area and so Jerry would be the sole trader there.

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The medicine woman also needed the young man's kidneys to boil them in water containing a potent indigineous root. Jerry would then not only bath in this chemistry but would also drink a quarter liter of the same mixture. This ritual would ensure that he would be protected against accidents, against the witchcraft and sorcery of jealous people and against bad luck. The same ritual would facilitate his easy and quick promotion at TCMTI. Finally, the medicine woman wanted the teeth to make a waist band made of these teeth. Jerry would wear the waist band for extra protection.

So that was why Jerry found himself in Tondi so often but the hunt was not successful. The first attempt, at night, to grab a young man failed because he fought back like a buffalo against his ageing attackers and escaped in the darkness. The second attempt did not succeed either. The victim outpaced his pursuers in the chase and they lost him in the bushes. Then the two scheming uncle and nephew decided to hire the paid services of two man-hunters. The man-hunters scouted for their prey in the neighboring village of Zole, spotted a herdboys in the shrubs, ambushed him, knocked him dead and skinned him to remove all the muscular tissue, kidneys and all the teeth. They then buried the remains in a shallow grave. They remained hidden in the bush until nightfall and stealthily delivered the 'goods' at the uncle's house. He paid them their due and they left. The uncle, on his part, delivered the 'spoils' at the medicine woman's house the same Thursday night of October of that year.

Vultures flying above the shallow grave and a report of a missing herd boy made to the Police prompted the Police to start investigations which led to the grave. The remains were exhumed for a post mortem and the pathologist's findings were that death had been occasioned by a powerful blow from a heavy and blunt object. The medical report also indicated that all the muscle tissue together with the two kidneys as well all but two teeth were missing having been non clinically and violently knocked out. However, although a docket was opened, the culprits were not found.

Jerry arrived in Tondi in the course of the afternoon of Saturday, and the three went into business straight away. The first boiled mixture was collected and the grinding-mill was treated in the night. The bathing in the second mixture and the drinking of the kidney juice

also took place that very night. The mission accomplished, the medicine woman was duly and fully paid and the following morning Jerry was in a big hurry to be on his way back to Talkville. He carried the remaining 5-litre mixture which, once he had arrived back in Talkville, he poured into the TCMTI taxi №10's radiator, started the engine, revved it to ensure the 'new water' had circulated properly inside it and was satisfied. He sprinkled the rest of the 'holy water' on the taxi's floor, seats, ceiling and windscreen.

From the year of the ritual onwards, Jerry's progress came in leaps and bounds. He continued to hold the monopoly of the grinding-mill business in Tondi and the big profits he was making enabled him to have constructed, a large brick and tile 4-bedroomed, 2-lounge house at his homestead to replace the falling round mud and thatch huts that had stood there for ages. The house, the only modern house in the village, stood out in sharp contrast to the rest of the village landscape. Next, he bought a 5-ton lorry for village use and with it, his driver ferried firewood, harvest crops, people, and goods of all types in the villages. He had now appointed his ageing uncle to be the general manager of his businesses at the village.

In the city, affairs were also sailing very smoothly for Jerry. The most prestigious hires - to airports, parties, for diplomats, with business people and so on - were allocated to Jerry's TCMTI taxi №10 and this meant fat tips. Additionally, within five years, Jerry had risen within the ranks from the position of a mere driver to that of driver-supervisor in charge of all the TCMTI taxi drivers operating in the V section of metropolitan Talkville.

Cracks started to appear in the walls of the fortress when in one week, three different villagers went to report to the village headman about having heard a human cry coming from the JR grinding-mill. Superstitious and suspicious by nature and upbringing, the headman immediately ran to the nearest Police post, 2 kilometers away, to report the allegation. Knowing that they were dealing with a case involving a mechanical object, the grinding-mill and an unnatural entity, the presumed human cry, the Police decided to also use a mechanical gadget, a tape recorder, to monitor and perhaps record the cry. They deployed therefore, one per day, ten plain-clothes police details equipped with a hidden minute tape recorder and disguised as

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ordinary villagers come to have their grain milled . It took them to the 4th day of patient, constant and attentive surveillance to hear, for sure, and to record the strange and mournful ‘Help, help, I’m exhausted, I can’t grind anymore, please’ coming from the grinding-mill. The Tondi Police relayed this information to their counterparts in Talkville and waited patiently.

Three months after this report, 2 frightened passengers who had hired TCMTI taxi №10 in Talkville rushed to the Talkville Police station to report having heard a stress human cry coming from the taxi’s engine. The Talkville Police who already had a file on this human cry case compared notes with their colleagues in Tondi, deployed, one by one, 7 officers also armed with a hidden tape recorder, to hire taxi №10. They waited 13 days before one of them heard and recorded the human cry.

When Talkville and Tondi Police stations with the assistance of a sound specialist, compared the cries, they concluded that they were from the same person. However taped cries alone could not constitute sufficient evidence upon which to arrest Jerry but he remained on the Talkville and Tondi Police list as the first suspect.

While all these developments were taking place, Jerry was having problems of a different nature. For years now things between his wife and him had not been well. They had separated, had reconciled and had separated again before finally divorcing. The divorce had shattered enough the wife but when it came to her ears that he was dating her best friend and that they were going to wed, she could not stomach it. She drove to the Talkville Police station and reported that Jerry always wore, around his waist, human teeth on a string!

A search on Jerry’s person exposed the human teeth on a string. Asked where he had obtained them from and what they were for, Jerry had no satisfactory answer to give. Asked to listen to the human cries both recorded next to his grinding-mill in Tondi and in his TCMTI taxi №10 in Talkville respectively, and to explain their meaning, he mumbled no satisfactory answers.

When the parents of the missing herdboy were called to listen to the tapped human cries, they confirmed that the cries were those of their missing son. A forensic comparison of the teeth found around Jerry’s

waist with the two found on the gums of the exhumed remains, confirmed that the teeth had come from the same person.

With all this overwhelming evidence against him, Jerry confessed everything and implicated everybody. The uncle, the medicine woman and the two man-hunters were dragged into detention, charged, tried, found guilty and sentenced. Jerry was given 30 years, the uncle 55 years, the medicine woman 60 years and the two man-hunters life sentences each in jail, with hard labor.

At the time of the writing of this episode, the JR grinding-mill's engine had broken down following an engine knock and Jerry's former TCMTI taxi №10's engine had ceased. Also, rumors circulating in Talkville were that wedding preparations between his ex-wife and his best friend were at a very advanced stage.

Story №20.

Fresh Blood on the Taxi Seats, Floor and Dashboard

At the beginning of each year and for the whole year running, TCMTI always assigned two taxis, one for day and the other for night shift, to three strategic pick and drop points, namely the Talkville Central hospital, the Airport and the Food Mall. By way of this arrangement, the drivers of the specific TCMTI taxis would report for work as usual, drive their cars to and park them at the designated TCMTI taxi bays at the above-mentioned strategic locations and wait for their passengers. At the end of each shift, the drivers would then drive back to the TCMTI offices to leave the day's takings there before driving back to their homes in the taxis. Any driver who had been chosen for any one of these shifts always counted his or her blessings. This particular year, the stars shone on Joel and his TCMTI taxi №13 was given the Talkville Food Mall as his operational area.

The men and women who knew Joel and his cousin, Jonathan, and who later heard and learnt about the tragedy and the mysterious episode which happened in their lives, were not at all surprised. They knew that Joel and Jonathan were very close. The two had been neighbors from infancy right through to adulthood in the same Talkville township of Cachette. They had always assisted each other in many circumstances and in times of trouble and for this reason,