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English Coursework: Creative Writing

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Mildew creates a wrinkled skin over the half-eaten rice filled pan. A cracked glass of murky water magnifies the light protruding from the tangled blind. A vile aroma circulates the empty walls, and there slumped on the stained rug, lies a disillusioned and motionless man. A man in his mid-forties of African origin, yet no one had shown enough courtesy to ask him of his home life as he roamed the golden sands of the Ivory Coast.

The night was vanquished as the morning rays pierced the lingering darkness. Golly - as he had been aptly named by his unconcerned neighbours - stirred from his slump; gradually mustering enough strength to explore his still very foreign high-rise 'family' apartment. Except it seemed more appropriate for a man in his situation due to the one room sleeping arrangement and broom cupboard converted kitchen.

What a contrast the balcony view showed. The concrete jungle which he had been promised was the land of opportunity, yet the men who had smuggled him away from his wife and two children stressed he would certainly land on his feet and afford to bring his family over for a better life within a year of his arrival. However the wonderful British regime refused to fund his escapade and so five years on he found himself with no word from his family, no work and barely enough to pay for his dreary existence. Trapped, higher than he had ever ventured, and no one battered an eyelid. The money he had initially been given had turned from a thick wad of crisp notes to a few jangling silver pieces, exploitation was the main problem. He spoke the language partially and Liverpudlian so he had picked up was a whole other language from anything barely resembling English.

He despised the endless comments directed his way. So many had complained about the stench from his living quarters, and what kind of a tag was 'Golly'. In his homeland he had been called Ikamah, but it was just an annoyance and inconvenience to enforce his name on the idle teenagers who never let up with their increasing ignorance of his culture and pressing racist comments.

It was not a good time to be black in Liverpool. Others of his 'kind' had segregated, since they wanted as much as Ikamah to be accepted and not to be stereotyped as the much hated immigrants. If they had grouped together they would have been spared due to sheer number, yet individually they were weak to the ever-dying tolerance of their white counterparts. Ikamah had recognized he was no longer safe in his community, the newspapers were no longer black and white; just black, scattered with the childhood faces of the victims of the recent excessive vigilante attacks.

Extremely unsure, he had to be tough and see his time through. A job was what he needed, and where better than from the Liverpool council. Road sweeping was not an occupation which was discriminatory and the night shifts would mean he could sleep

during the day which he regarded the most tormenting and intimidating time. And so Ikmaah was accepted for the long hours, poorly paid job, which no self-respecting white male would have considered applying for, but pride was not important and he was a robust figure, so it was on these grounds that Liverpool council felt they were very fortunate.

Ikmaah was good at his job and worked long hours, saving every last copper for the safe shipment of his children who he knew would barely recognize him now. However it was this excessive working which proved to be hugely risky for Ikmaah.

It was a particularly biting night on the streets. The cobbled pavements were slippery on the council's 'finest' working shoe. It appeared to Ikmaah that sweeping this very open and notorious area of the city left him increasingly vulnerable, yet it had to be cleared or there was no monthly pay packet and no payment resulted in no family.

It was totally clear until about two in the morning when Ikmaah realized it was ever so quiet, too quiet in fact. Distant footsteps could barely be identified but yet seemed to be increasing in volume. He turned his back and whistled a tune from back home when he was cut short by an unsuspected gunshot. It was time to run. These gangs of naïve teenagers were devilish in their way and proved to be a huge obstacle for the black community.

Ikmaah was sure he was in deep danger. Dropping his broom in the confusion, he began to gasp, struggling for his breath. As he fled he skidded over the aggravating cobbles. It was so cold yet he felt an extremely warming feeling pulsating in his stomach. He rubbed his side, as his stitch became an intolerable cramp. But as he touched his left rib he felt an unusual sticky sensation, looking down to notice thick blood trickling from his chest.

Almost instantly he fell to his knees, and lay on his back. Death was upon him. The cold had numbed the initial pain and he simply gazed into his children's mahogany eyes as he remembered them back in the Ivory Coast.

He had never imagined dying this way. What an awful recent life he had left, no accomplishments. All he desired was to be back home. He had worked so hard for so little and as he fought in the freezing conditions it was a steel capped boot to the face which was to end it all. He lay motionless in his cobbled grave with his life seeping away, watched over by his armed 'funeral directors' dressed head to toe in black.

Another death unsolved by the constabulary. But who would miss him, his family had no idea of his whereabouts and so his body wound up – like so many to meet the same fate - in the Mersey. And as his neighbours learnt of his untimely demise and his priceless burial on behalf of the youths that had thoughtfully ended his eternal agony, there was little to reflect upon except perhaps Ikmaah's apartment could be finally cleared for the arrival of another young African man in the same precarious predicament, who was sure to land on his feet and afford the safe passage of his family, within the year.