



## Aladinma: Eighties to Nineties: a Reconnect

**Peter Obidike**

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*Aladinma is a coming-of-age novel set against the global changes and advances of the late twentieth century.*

Childhood friends find themselves in a courtroom battle over the copyright of a movie in Peter Obidike's novel *Aladinma*.

Ginika wrote his first play in primary school, for his drama group. After the play was produced, Uchewuba, another drama student, entered it into a local contest, but gave no credit to Ginika. The play won. Ginika, unable to prove the plagiarism, became determined not to find himself in the same situation again.

Still, as an adult, despite all of his precautions, the situation repeats after Ginika embraces emergent technology in the 1990s. He starts a blog, writing essays about his life, or containing observations of society. As he becomes more adept, he decides to write a script, releasing it over the course of a year before publishing it as a book. Unbeknownst to Ginika, Uchewuba has been reading his blog: he turns Ginika's serial into a movie before the book is published. The resulting copyright battle finds the two childhood friends on opposite sides of the courtroom, though this time, Ginika has proof.

Ginika's story is all encompassing. Among the cast, only he exhibits true agency, finding that his choices somewhat influence events around him. The narrative follows him through childhood, primary and secondary school, university, and the mandatory military service, covering the minutiae of his life with thick descriptions.

Because the prose is also dense with descriptions of the actions that Ginika and others take, and because its story is told without dialogue, the novel becomes tiresome as it progresses. Interest wanes further as the narrative becomes overzealous about establishing Ginika's hardworking nature, but at the expense of giving his major life events room to breathe.

The book's abundant descriptions are more beneficial when it comes to establishing a strong sense of place. Nigeria is presented with solid, foundational details that extend to necessary information about the country's history and landscapes. School campuses that rest next to wide-open fields are covered with visual details, while a scene involving a cattle drive and a dying cow illustrates how entwined agricultural pursuits are with formal educations. Nigeria's dust and heat are captured, as is the crush of seven children in a car and ten young men in a hostel dorm. Elsewhere, a line snakes around a large building. Such evocative descriptions lead to greater understanding.

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DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (November 20, 2020)

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