

It's All Trouble: The Story of a Car That Never Gets Going

Samson Kamara Sr.

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Buying a lemon—a car plagued by mechanical problems from the day it's driven off the dealer's lot—is an all-too-common experience. Samson Kamara, a science teacher-turned-writer, has imagined that situation into a short novel, *It's All Trouble*.

Adrian Jordan is a security guard in Birmingham, England. While shopping with his girlfriend Anna, his car is stolen. He cannot report the theft to the police, because the papers for the car are out-of-date. Soon Adrian spots an old but nice-looking Morris Minor 1000, which he buys in spite of the objections of Anna and of his father, who happens to own a garage and a tow truck. "It's unique. No rascloft will thief it," he says when Anna expresses her dismay.

It's All Trouble charts the next five days, each marred as the car breaks down for assorted reasons: an ignition system problem, a piece of the suspension falling off, a wiring fire, and more. Each time, Adrian is reluctantly rescued by his father, and Anna, his father, or someone else tells him to take the car back to the dealer. Adrian tries, but his pleas are shrugged off; it was an *as is* deal.

The author is a native of Sierra Leone who has spent time in Birmingham. While he shows familiarity with that English city, his use of English confirms that it is not his first language. Some of the words and terms used are eccentric, as with "rascloft" above and his use of "Tommy" for "tummy" and "gush" for "gosh." Kamara's syntax and grammar will be unfamiliar, and the formatting of dialogue sometimes lacks opening quotation marks, closing quotation marks, or both. The narrative is chronological, but the point of view wanders a bit. No character grows or changes dramatically. Adrian is not even a particularly sympathetic protagonist. In his frustration, he bullies Anna and even slaps her: "Oh shut up, you do not know nothing, do you?" he says. "You cow, you have been silly and trying to get on my nerves...No car is one hundred percent faultless...You get that into your F.ing head Okay?"

The book ends with a whimper. Adrian sells the car, albeit for a pittance, but the rear wheels fall off as he is helping the buyer tow the car away. The buyer, who intends to send the car to the scrap yard, gives Adrian twenty pounds, and Adrian drinks up the money before heading home to a less than warm welcome from Anna.

There the novel ends. The story may have been better rendered as comedy, but some readers might enjoy this short novel for the glimpse it offers into immigrant culture in England.

GARY PRESLEY (August 16, 2010)

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